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NGOs, Democratisation and Grassroots Empowerment:
A Case Study of Rural Development Organisation’s
Approach to Social Change in Pakistan

By

Syed Owais

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of Warwick, Department of Sociology
August 2017
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Syed Owais
August 2017
Author's Declaration

This thesis is my own original work. The material in this thesis is submitted for a degree to the University of Warwick only and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.
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<td>PPA</td>
<td>Participatory Poverty Assessment</td>
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<td>PPAF</td>
<td>Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Punjab Rural Support Programme</td>
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<td>PRSPs</td>
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<td>PSC</td>
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<td>RAHA</td>
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<td>RDO</td>
<td>Rural Development Organisation</td>
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RSPN  Rural Support Programmes Network
RSPs  Rural Support Programmes
SAP  Social Action Programme
SAPs  Structural Adjustment Policies
SDF  Swiss Development Foundation
SNGOs  Southern Non-Governmental Organisations
SO  Social Organiser
SOU  Social Organisation Unit
SUNGI  Sungi Development Foundation
TA  Travelling Allowance
TAP  The Agriculture Project
TNCs  Transnational Corporations
ToRs  Terms of Reference
TVOs  Traditional Voluntary Organisations
UC  Union Council
UK-DFID  United Kingdom-Department for International Development
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UN-SAPAP  United Nations-South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
VB  Village Bank
VO  Village Organisation
WB  World Bank
WHO  World Health Organisation
WO  Women's Organisation
TO THE CHERISHED MEMORIES OF

MY FATHER, SYED ZUBAIR,
&
MY SON, SYED MOHAMMAD.
Abstract

This thesis contributes to existing knowledge on NGOs in the global South through examining the case study of RDO, an NGO in Pakistan, investigating the influence of historically structured formal and informal institutions and the politico-economic factors shaping its efforts for democratic and empowerment-oriented change in rural communities. It analyses RDO's philosophy and practice regarding the formation of community organisations, which are intended to work democratically for their own development and to access government and other NGOs' services. It does this by analysing 63 qualitative interviews, 20 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), organisational documents and observational data from 8-months fieldwork.

It is argued that, rather than democratising and empowering community members, whose relationships with each other and with the state agencies have been historically patronage-based (Gough et al., 2004) and marked by inequalities based on ethnicity, gender, and class, RDO tends to deal with the communities in a patronage-based manner. This is due to its inability to allocate adequate time to communities to institutionalise democratic values in place of path dependent structures (Pierson, 2000) of inequality and practices of patron-clientelism. This, in turn, emanates from its shift away from the empowerment agenda and subscription to neoliberal mode of interventions. Additionally, the interventions by national and international NGOs, most of which have burgeoned in the wake of post-2000 political and natural disasters, have also socialised the rural communities to perceive NGOs as providers of welfare goods. This has made it harder for RDO to work according to its goals. Hence, instead of changing path dependent structures (Pierson, 2000) of inequality and patron-clientelism (Gough et al., 2004), RDO, like most NGOs in the global South, has largely become an agent of its perpetuation.
Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.0 Statement of the Problem

This thesis contributes to current knowledge on Pakistani NGOs by undertaking the case study of the Rural Development Organisation (RDO), investigating the influences and implications of formal and informal institutions. It also explores the politico-economic factors shaping its efforts to organise the rural poor in community organisations (COs). Community Organisations (COs) are organised to operate democratically as self-help groups engaged, for instance, in maintaining local physical infrastructure and acting as the means for accessing services, such as education from government departments. NGOs are thus expected to lead to empowerment of members. The thesis analyses the activities and views of RDO’s employees and community members along with exploring a variety of organisational documents. The aim is to determine the extent to which RDO has been successful in democratising rural communities, whose relationships have been persistently characterised by patron-clientelism (Gough et al., 2004; Wood, 1997) and inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and class. The thesis draws on institutional arguments to consider whether RDO has been subject to influences from donors (e.g., specific types of interventions, reporting formats), processes in other NGOs (e.g., type and mechanism of interventions), and community demands and expectations (e.g., a training or an intervention) or not. In considering these factors, the thesis seeks to contribute to current knowledge on the role of historically constructed structures in shaping NGOs’ practices for social change in rural areas in developing countries.
1.1 Background to the Research

The motivation to analyse a range of factors influencing the goals and activities of NGOs and the community organisations they establish for pro-poor democratisation and empowerment derives from the opposing arguments made about their potential for social change. When NGOs began proliferating globally in the 1980s, they were heralded as ‘... a global “associational revolution” …’ (Salamon, 1994: 109), ‘conscience of the world’ (Fielding-Smith, 2004: n.p.) and ‘global people-power’ (Karajkov, 2005: n.p.). These views were based on the understanding that, being non-profit-oriented, NGOs would work for public good without any commercial motive. Similarly, owing to their relatively smaller size, ability to experiment and design customised ‘solutions’ for community level problems, their ability to reach out and directly engage with the communities, NGOs were presumed ‘... to articulate [the] neglected and marginalised interests and issues that are being ignored by the state actors and the economy’ (Beyer, 2007: 521). Thus, for instance, in Korten’s (1987: 149) often-cited taxonomy, NGOs were proposed to be gradually evolving and working towards ‘sustainable systems development’. This meant that NGOs would address the ‘...dysfunctional aspects of the policy and institutional setting of the villages and sectors within which they work’. The ‘dysfunctional’ institutional setting could be the absence of local government structure, patronage-base service delivery in highly bureaucratic environment, or the relative difficulty women, children and lower classes find in accessing health, education and employment opportunities.

By mid-1990s, however, the beliefs about NGOs’ potential as agents of social change in developing countries began to be challenged. Firstly, it is held that although NGOs have been quite successful in designing and delivering newer interventions in education, health etc., they have been less successful in organising
people to challenge structured inequalities (Bebbington et al., 2008). This has led, instead, for example, to nepotism, favouritism and patronage-based transactions in local government and public service departments in developing countries. The change has arguably come as a consequence of more ready availability of funds for services than for ‘constructing’ and ‘strengthening’ civil society associations at the grassroots. Secondly, and linked to the preceding criticism, even in service-delivery, NGOs have been criticised for the limited efficacy of their sector-specific, stand-alone projects (Kiggins and Erikson, 2013), which appear to have been ideologically influenced, if not dictated, by the donors (Wood, 1997). For instance, the provision of small-scale loans to poorer men and women originally began as an intervention to provide financial services to the poor who could not access commercial banks. However, over the years, the World Bank’s growing interest and funding in the sector changed its ‘social mission’ into a ‘commercial’ venture whereby credit disbursement rather than poverty alleviation became the sole aim. Thirdly, in cases where NGOs engage in ‘alternative’ development strategies alongside service-delivery, their scaling up is argued to have led to the introduction of organisational practices, which keeps the organisations busy in preparing reports than allocating time to the needs and wishes of the community members (Hudock, 1999). Fourthly, if some degree of empowerment does take place – for instance, in the shape of women’s access to education, participation in local government, enhancement in men’s and women’s income through entrepreneurship – as a consequence of prespecified and often quantitative reporting formats (Ebrahim, 2003; Edwards and Hulme, 2000), the achievements are not clearly elaborated upon. Finally, perhaps owing to the combined effect of the above factors, NGOs’ relationship with community members is said to have taken on the form of ‘patron-clientelism’ (Ghosh, 2009; Sahoo, 2013). ‘Patron-client’ relationships are usually found in peasant households and wider structures in developing countries in which ‘…strong families dominate weaker ones through multi-stranded, paternalistic ties
rather than single-stranded ties more associated with the idea of contracts and market transactions’ (Wood, 1997: 87). NGOs’ resort to such practices might be attributed to their inability to insulate themselves from the wider organisational and institutional environment, which might be characterised by patron-client relationships.

Applying these criticisms to the Pakistani context, the critique often derives from an analytical focus on donor(s)-NGO relationships, particularly the negative impact of foreign aid on voluntarism and professionalism in local voluntary community based organisations and NGOs (e.g., Bano, 2008a; 2008b; 2012). The intriguing title of Bano’s (2012) research, *Breakdown in Pakistan: how aid is eroding institutions of collective welfare*, which is largely aligned with the earlier views that most of the Pakistani NGOs have become ‘money-making machines’ (Qadeer, 1997: 757) suffering from ‘easy money syndrome’ (Zaidi, 1999: 268), offers one of the most powerful critiques of the influence of foreign donors on subverting CBOs’ and NGOs’ goals and agendas. However, other Pakistani researchers have found funded interventions of NGOs in microcredit to be making ‘valuable contribution’ (Khan, 2006: 95) to ‘significant positive impact’ (Ali et al., 2016: 555) in altering women’s status both socially and economically. Similarly, Shah (2009), Ur-rehman (2008) and Khan et al. (2007) have found Pakistani NGOs to be quite successful in forging alliances with communities for broad-based development by establishing people’s organisations. Firstly, such contradictory views regarding the impact of aid in themselves call for an investigation of NGOs to determine the extent of donors’ negative and positive influence. Secondly, and most importantly, this thesis argues that, in addition to analysing donor-NGO relationships, it is also important to analyse the wider processes that might prevail in the Pakistani NGO sector as a whole and the political and economic conditions under which they operate to adequately assess the outcomes of their empowerment activities. Thirdly, in order
to adequately assess the current practices of NGOs in general and Pakistani NGOs in particular, there is a need to put equal weight on the role of history as ‘... the medium of social structuring’ (Abrams, 1980: 12). This emphasis emanates from the view that institutions, defined as ‘humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction … [and] reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life’ (North, 1990: 3-4), do not emerge or operate in a vacuum. Rather, they are the product of history. Secondly, once structured, they have an enduring influence on both formal and informal social settings (Pierson, 2000), both individual and collective. Since institutions have a historically contingent character (Abbott, 1991), this thesis takes primarily a historical institutionalist approach to analyse how far NGOs have been successful in changing rural Pakistan or how much they have been subject to the influences from already existing political and social institutions.

With the foregoing issues in mind, this thesis has the following aims. Firstly, it explores the ideological and politico-economic factors that became the bases for the establishment and development of NGOs in Pakistan. Secondly, it historically explores the factors that might have influenced the philosophy and practice of Pakistani NGOs’ efforts exerted for poor people’s empowerment. In this regard, the focus is on exploring challenges that the NGOs might have faced, perhaps, due to the variety of needs and expectations of the communities they engaged with. The thesis also focuses on exploring circumstantial factors arising out of political and economic conditions that have prevailed over the course of the history of NGOs in Pakistan. Similarly, taking stock of the combined influence of the above factors, the thesis also explores the influence of funding regimes, which might have passed through different evolutionary phases and therefore might have presented varying challenges for the NGOs. Finally, the thesis aims to develop a coherent understanding of the implications of the above factors for Pakistani NGOs’ potential
as agents of change. It also considers the more general issues relating to the changing nature of NGOs in the global South.

In order to explore these issues in depth, the Rural Development Organisation (RDO) was selected as a case study in this research for three reasons. Founded in 1990s¹, the organisation has been in existence for more than 25 years working for the organisation and improvement of the conditions of poor people in rural areas. This means that the narratives from the organisational documents and most senior employees of the organisation would help in exploring the factors that have been contingent to its goal of rural development. Secondly, its official policy states that ‘... once people are organised they will have a “voice” and would be in a position to engage with the government and improve both the quality of governance and of service delivery’ (RDO, 2015b: n.p.). RDO’s aim is to organise the rural poor in such a way that with or without its presence people would act collectively and democratically to resolve issues that affect some aspects of their lives. Moreover, this collective action would also entail engaging with the government agencies to access their services. Implementing this ‘social guidance’ approach, RDO has organised 34,366 Community Based Organisations (CBOs) covering 809,188 men and women (RDO, 2015a: 28). Thirdly, RDO’s policy also states that its approach to rural development is distinctive in two senses. According to it, most development NGOs in Pakistan establish community organisations in rural areas merely as mechanisms for receiving welfare and relief benefits from development agencies and from government departments. RDO, however, envisions community organisations as means for altering citizen-state relationship. Finally, although it was established in 1990s, its ‘Rural Support Programme (RSP)’ approach is an

¹ For the purpose of anonymity, the actual name of the organisation and year of its establishment is not given. I have place an asterisk (*) with the first time mentioning of the actual name of a Pakistani city or a place therei. For details on these and other aspects of anonymization, please refer to section 3.8 of Chapter 3.
indigenously designed model of rural development that was pioneered in 1959 in a
project at Comilla (Rasmussen et al., 2007), a town in what was then East Pakistan.

1.2 Researching NGOs in Pakistan: An Experiential Account

The decision to explore the factors influencing NGOs’ goals and practices grew
incrementally partly out of my professional experience and partly as a consequence
of trying out different analytical approaches during my PhD journey. I had the
experience of teaching community development at the University of Peshawar* (Pakistan), part of which involved taking students on short fieldtrips to NGOs’
offices and field sites to help them learn the practical business of the development
sector. Additionally, a few friends working in the NGOs, off and on, used to discuss
the exigencies of organisational and broader institutional environment under the
influence of which NGOs were working. The idea, however, remained dormant until
the opportunity for a PhD scholarship came up in late 2011. Based on the limited
reading that I had conducted around NGOs, I began the project, problematising the
concept of ‘organisational learning’ in Pakistani NGOs. The idea was inspired by
the work of Argyris and Schöen (1996) on ‘single-loop learning’ and ‘double-loop
learning’ in organisations, which, at the time this project began, had not been
explored yet in Pakistani NGOs. However, I gradually realised that my focus was
too narrow. Thus, while searching for complementary theories and concepts, I
came across Lipsky’s (2010 [1980]) work, which, though developed in the Northern
context of public service bureaucracies, appeared relevant to hypothesising
whether Pakistani NGOs’ field-staff might be translating official policies and
procedures into their own terms to make their ‘developmental’ roles easier while
‘serving’ the poor. In addition, if this were the case, was it due to job pressures, lack
of commitment to their jobs and the organisational goals, or simply disregard for
and disagreement with the management regarding their duties? Such an approach
called for looking at the wider ‘organisational’ and ‘institutional’ environment of NGOs in which such practices might be occurring. Thus, the project moved into the direction of the relevant literature, and I was initially introduced to historical institutionalism (e.g., Gough et al., 2004; Hall, 1989b; Pierson, 2004). Later, the sociological institutional theory of DiMaggio and Powell (1983; 1991) was explored both of which are briefly described below.

Once the fieldwork began, the multi-theoretical focus gradually began to focus centrally on the institutional literature only. Thus, in terms of DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory, I wished to determine the extent to which organisational policies and procedures in the case study organisation such as specific types of interventions, intervention-mechanisms or reporting styles, were shaped by the influences of the wider NGO ‘environment’. If there were ‘sociological’ influences from the procedures and practices of other NGOs, then I wished to see the extent of their influence in RDO’s history. In this regard, the focus turned historical in two ways. Firstly, in terms of Gough et al.’s (2004) framework of ‘informal security regime’, which they originally developed for comparative analysis of social policy in developing countries, I wished to see whether the characteristically patronage-based regime in Pakistan changed in the operational areas of RDO or, instead, the organisation was influenced by such structures either owing to pressures from the community, the donors, the funding regime or the wider NGO ‘environment’. If the latter was the case to a certain extent, then, instead of being taken as change agent, RDO might be taken as agent for the perpetuation of historically constructed structures. That is, RDO’s efforts to innovate might be restricted by historically powerful pressures inducing path dependency. Keeping this analytical focus in view, I finally pinned down the research question given in the following section.
1.3 Research Question

This thesis addresses the following main research question:

How have community social structure, the politico-economic environment and donors reshaped RDO, an NGO in Pakistan, to achieve grassroots democratisation and empowerment, and what are their implications for NGOs’ potential for social change in Pakistan and more widely in the global South?

Within the scope of this overarching question, the thesis addresses the following sub-questions (SQs).

SQ1 – Under what politico-economic contexts and with what approach to social change was RDO established?

SQ2 – Over the course of its history, how have RDO’s innovations in organisational procedures and interventions at community level positively and/or negatively contributed to its goal of organising community members for bottom-up change?

SQ3 – What challenges have intra-community relationships, donors and the politico-economic environment presented for RDO’s vision and practice of its approach to change?

SQ4 – To what extent has RDO been successful in its goal of democratisation and empowerment, and what has facilitated or constrained it in this regard?

SQ5 – What are the implications of the findings for NGOs’ potential as change-agents in Pakistan and more widely in the global South?
1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 2 offers a literature review. The chapter has been divided into four sections, and it specifically addresses two research questions (SQ3 and SQ5). The chapter begins by situating these research questions within the wider debate about the emergence and potential of NGOs as agents of change in the global South. Since the NGO-sector is a relatively recent phenomenon in the institutional matrix of most developing countries, the first section presents an overview of the ideological factors and politico-economic conditions, which paved the way for their emergence. This necessitates discussion about the potential of NGOs as agents of change and factors that positively or negatively affect their performance and potential. Therefore, the second section of the chapter reviews arguments for and against NGOs’ role in introducing and/or supporting processes of democratisation for supplanting citizen-state relationships in the global South. The third section of the chapter focuses on identifying factors that have been conducive to and/or hindered NGOs in the achievements of their aims. The section particularly focuses on the review of literature in relation to two sets of factors in this regard, namely (intra) organisational and institutional factors. It further argues for the significance of analysing the historically persistent role of institutions in shaping NGOs’ practices and in developing emblematically similar organisational features across a number of regions in the developing world. Reviewing existing research on NGOs in Pakistan, the section argues for the potential significance of institutional arguments elaborated on in the final section. The final section argues for combining DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory regarding isomorphic processes in organisations and historical institutionalists’ notion of path dependence (e.g., Pierson, 2000; 2004) to analyse NGOs in Pakistan. The section also critically evaluates the applicability of Gough et al.’s (2004) ‘informal security regime’ in combination with sociological and historical
institutionalism for investigating the influence of the already existing micro and macro structures on NGOs’ agendas and practices.

Chapter 3 offers justification for the methodological strategies adopted in this research for answering the research questions. It begins with an account of the theoretical-triangulation, which informed the selection of the case study approach and the selection of RDO as a case study. Following this, the chapter discusses the process of gaining official access to the organisation. The chapter then provides justification as well as a detailed account of the sampling procedures and data collection methods, namely qualitative interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observations and documentary evidence. The discussion on methods also elaborates upon and justifies the reliance on historical narratives for exploring the organisational practices in the recent and remote past. Side by side with this, the section provides a personal reflexive account of the data collection strategies and processes. Finally, the chapter outlines and discusses ethical considerations as well as the strategies and reasons for anonymising the research subjects in the empirical data reported in the data chapters.

Chapter 4 provides a look at the history and political economy of NGOs in Pakistan. The chapter addresses two research questions (SQ3 and SQ5). The chapter is structured keeping in mind, particularly, the historical institutional approach adopted in the thesis. The chapter not only aims to establish the broader context in which the NGOs emerged in Pakistan, but also presents the predominant features of central and local government political institutions and the reasons due to which the majority of Pakistanis have been politically and socially excluded. The chapter analytically describes the characteristic features of the micro and macro social and political structure of Pakistan in which NGOs emerged and for the changing of which they have been working (SQ3). Reviewing the existing literature on Pakistani
NGOs, it presents an analysis of the socio-cultural environment in which they have been operating, the type of strategies and approaches they adopt to change the socio-economic conditions of the poor and the funding regime in which NGOs work (SQ3). The final section of the chapter is a review of existing literature on the potential of NGOs as agents of bottom-up change in Pakistan (SQ5). Thus, the chapter works both as a background to the research context and a framework for the analysis of empirical data.

Chapters 5 to 8 present the empirical data collected in the fieldwork. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the factors that led to the establishment of RDO. In particular, the chapter focuses on providing an historical account of the foundational ideology of RDO (SQ1). In this regard, the chapter identifies the factors that led to the achievements and limitations of the ideology adopted by other organisations prior to the establishment of RDO. This way, the chapter sets the stage for the analysis of normative ideals underlying RDO’s approach to social change and its achievements in this regard. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of innovations in its approach and factors that have positively or negatively influenced the implementation of the approach to social change (SQ3).

Chapter 6 narrows the focus down to a narrative and observational analysis of an agricultural value chain development project to determine the extent to which the organisation was successful in achieving the objectives of the project. The chapter also seeks to analyse the underlying reasons for the adoption of the value chain development, the factors that influenced the implementation and the implications of the project for farming (SQ2 and SQ3). The chapter begins with a description of the objectives and intervention strategy for the formation of farmers' organisations for the introduction of value chain. Thereafter, the chapter analyses the process of interaction between the field-staff and the management of RDO on the one hand
and the interaction between community members and the field-staff on the other hand. It also provides an account of the process through which RDO’s field-staff garners community members’ expectations for their agricultural productivity and factors that influence the provision of project interventions (SQ4). The chapter also analyses the views of community members and RDO’s members of staff regarding various measures undertaken in the project. Where relevant and necessary, I also identify positive aspects of the project both from the point of view of community members and RDO’s staff.

Chapter 7 extends the analysis to a project wider in scope than that examined in Chapter 6, given that it was implemented using a new poverty assessment tool for identifying potential beneficiaries. Similarly, it aimed at women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation through microfinance village banks and the implementation of a new three-tiered social mobilisation strategy for institutionalising grassroots organisations of men and women (SQ2). The chapter not only analyses the present practices of RDO, but also identifies continuing historical influences on it (SQ4). The chapter begins with an overview of the immediate circumstances under which the project began and then proceeds to the analysis of the interventions. The chapter analyses the evolution of each of the above sectors by analysing organisational documents and interviewees’ narratives. Thus, the chapter identifies factors that positively and negatively influenced innovations in the interventions, which is simultaneously interwoven with observational, interview and documentary data about the current practices of RDO (SQ3 and SQ5).

Building on the analysis presented in Chapters 6 and 7, Chapter 8 focuses on the broader history of RDO and its institutional environment. The first section analyses the influence of historically and socially constructed structures at the community level, which posed challenges to RDO in ‘transforming’ rural livelihoods. The
section particularly analyses the historical narratives of experienced members of staff, both current and former, to identify factors that had an enduring influence on RDO’s goals and practices (SQ2). The second section analyses the socialising influence of RDO on community members to determine whether using a ‘social guidance’ approach contributed to closing the gap between citizens and state agencies. It focuses on the immediate interactional context of field-staff and community members and its implications for realising RDO’s vision for social change (SQ3). The final section of the chapter analyses the broader influences of the changing political economy and influences from the environment of the NGO sector in Pakistan on RDO (SQ4) and their implications for the organisation (SQ5).

Chapter 9 is the conclusion of the thesis, which seeks to use the evidence presented in the preceding chapters to answer the main research question. It analytically generalises from the case study of RDO to discuss more broadly the implications of the factors that influence NGOs, especially in the global South. It particularly discusses the wider implications of their practices with regard to social change at the grassroots level and relates these to the debate about the future of NGOs.
Chapter 2 – Navigating the World of NGOs: Themes and Issues in Current Knowledge

2.0 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, this thesis contributes to knowledge about the organisational and institutional factors that inhibit and facilitate NGOs’ efforts for democratic social change and economic development through grassroots activities for poor people’s empowerment. It does so by addressing the following main research question:

How have community social structure, the politico-economic environment and donors reshaped RDO, an NGO in Pakistan, to achieve grassroots democratisation and empowerment, and what are their implications for NGOs’ potential for social change in Pakistan and more widely in the global South?

Within the scope of this overarching question, the current chapter therefore reviews existing literature regarding the factors, which contributed to the emergence of NGOs as agents of change and service-providers in the global South. The chapter also surveys existing literature on the successes and limitations of NGOs and the micro as well as the macro factors from which the successes or failures emanate. In developing countries, the institution of grassroots-based and change-oriented NGOs emerged on a growing scale in the 1980s. Thus, section 1 of the chapter begins by considering the ideological and political economy factors that significantly contributed to the worldwide emergence and preponderance of NGOs throughout the global South. The section presents an overview of the Keynesian economics-oriented development
paradigm, under the influence of which most developing countries began economic ‘modernisation’ between 1950 and early 1980s. There are two reasons for briefly dwelling on this history. Firstly, as will become clearer in the section itself, the strategies of development had some negative outcomes for both the states and citizens of developing countries. Secondly, NGOs incrementally and marginally began playing some role during these decades to curb the perceived negative effects of the third world governments’ policies on citizens. This overview provides an historical framework to understand the unprecedented growth in NGOs in tandem with the rise of neoliberal policies for economic development during the 1980s. Following this, the second section of the chapter provides an evolving narrative regarding NGOs’ potential as agents of social change. The narrative is divided into two groups of views that have been influential in the popularisation of NGOs as means for strengthening civil society and as providers of services. In particular, it reviews the views of the World Bank and UN agencies to delineate the reasons they have been supporting and encouraging the growth of NGOs. Relatedly, the views of some scholars whose support for NGOs aligns with the narratives of the UN/World Bank are also reviewed. In addition to this, the section reviews the views of development scholars and practitioners whose ideas became inspirational for NGOs and their supporters to work for participatory-based change. It also describes changes in the discourses with which NGOs have been supported since their growth in 1980s.

Building on this, the third section analytically reviews the factors playing a role in both the successes and limitations of NGOs. Since the voluminous literature on NGOs is largely critical of their role as change-agents, the section primarily provides an overview of the organisational and institutional factors that have
affected them. The section demonstrates that most critical literature on NGOs is significantly focused on inequalities in donor-NGO relationships and the consequences of these inequalities for NGOs as organisations and as institutions. Towards the end of the section, the review critically engages with existing literature, particularly on NGOs in Pakistan, to highlight their theoretical and methodological limitations. This prepares the ground for the justification of the theoretical approach adopted in this thesis, which is explained in the final section (four) of the chapter.

Section four begins by introducing the institutional literature and its significance for analysing Pakistani NGOs. It elaborates on the potential relevance and applicability of DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) sociological institutional theory regarding ‘isomorphism’ in organisational ‘fields’. Building on this, the section explains the possibility of integrating it with historical institutional arguments regarding path dependent processes and the sub-analytical category of ‘self-reinforcing processes’ in the analysis of social and political phenomena. These concepts are then integrated into Gough et al.’s (2004) theoretical framework regarding an ‘informal security regime’, which is originally part of the broader ‘welfare regime’ framework developed for comparative analysis of social policy in developing countries. While explicating the framework, the section critically engages with the notion of an ‘informal security regime’ and assesses its applicability for analysing the factors that might have been influencing NGOs in Pakistan. Finally, the section describes the theoretical and methodological relevance of combining Gough et al.’s (2004) analytical ideas with path dependent arguments and sociological institutionalism for researching NGOs in Pakistan.
2.1 The Emergence of NGOs: Politico-Economic and Ideological Factors

Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have existed in many countries for a long time (Davies, 2014; Suzuki, 1998), but the form in which we know them currently emerged only after the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 (Ahmad and Potter, 2006: 21-23). In fact, it was at the UN that the term ‘NGO’ was coined while ascribing the ‘observer’ status to 41 international humanitarian organisations to allow them to participate in its deliberations on social and economic issues (Fowler, 2011). However, over the ensuing decades of 1960s, 1970s and especially 1980s, the term gradually gained international popularity and all those organisations that were engaged in development and empowerment in the global South began to be called NGOs. Between 1960s and late 1970s, there were fewer NGOs in the global South, some of which worked as alternative social movements and others engaged in mobilising voluntary contributions (Bebbington et al., 2008). They grew slowly because during the Cold War both socialist and capitalist governments took them as ‘voices of anti-state opposition forces’ (Howell and Pearce, 2001: 16). Their extensive involvement in grassroots activities, ranging from humanitarian and emergency relief to efforts for the empowerment of the poor, began in 1980s as a consequence of the poor outcomes of state-led modernisation in the South and the anti-state ideology of neoliberalism.

In 1950s and 1960s, the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America worked on the modernisation of their economies, the basic tenets of which were based on Keynesian economics. Keynes, whose ideas were formed in the backdrop of the Great Depression of 1930s (Hall, 1989a), argued that private markets were unstable and that the management of this instability necessitated
state intervention (Lapavitsas, 2005). This provided the ideological bases and social consensus in support of ‘... a managerial state and the mixed economy in the post-war world’ (Hall, 1989a: 365). Thus, the state assumed responsibility for monetary policy for controlling interest rates and fiscal policy for controlling spending and taxes (Palley, 2005: 21). Writing from the framework of Keynesianism (Lapavitsas, 2005: 33), Rostow (1960) proposed a five-staged model for the ‘modernisation’ of ‘traditional’ societies, which was exported to the Third World under the Truman doctrine for their development (Escobar, 1995). However, to help developing countries catch up with the rich countries of the North, he implanted the idea of a ‘leading sector – a sector that grows considerably faster than the economy as a whole and that gives dynamism to the rest of the economy’ (Emmerij, 2004: 30). Countries following this ‘doctrine of inequality’ (Rashid, 1983: 174) were expected to raise per capita income through the ‘trickle-down’ effect assuming that in the longer run ‘... growth would result not only in higher incomes for everyone [emphasis added], but also in a less unequal distribution which means that the income of the lower strata would rise more rapidly than that of the rich’ (Emmerij, 2004: 31). However, since the model ‘... was built in and for countries with which the [economics] profession was familiar, namely developed industrial economies’ (Seers, 1963: 79), it turned out to be beneficial only for a few smaller countries of South East Asia (Streeten and Burki, 1978: 411). Elsewhere, however, it resulted in ‘social crises and political upheavals’ (Seers, 1972: 21).

Towards the close of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, the World Bank and the UN family of organisations responded to the crises by shifting their emphasis from the growth-oriented approach to addressing the wider and chronic issues of poverty and inequality (Bell and Slater, 2004; Pronk, 2004). A series of
conferences held during the 1970s (Ruttan, 1984) popularised the Basic Needs (BN) approach to provide relief to the poor (Willis, 2005). The BN approach identified a number of misplaced assumptions and inefficiencies in the income growth model, such as the notion of (i) equitable distribution of income among all the consumers in the households, (ii) optimum efficiency of consumers, and (iii) the neglect of the sick, disabled, aged etc. (Streeten, 1979: 137). To address these, the BN approach called for improvements in the delivery of public services to the needy and economically inactive population and emphasised the need to address the issues of poverty and inequity (Edelman and Haugerud, 2005: 7). It also emphasised the need to address the

... ‘non-material’ needs (e.g., diversity of satisfying jobs, self-reliance, access to power, political freedom, national and cultural identities, a sense of purpose in life and work), partly in their own right and partly for the support they give to meeting basic ‘material’ needs, and therefore stresses motivational, institutional and organisational change as much as narrowly defined economic reform (Streeten and Burki, 1978: 414).

Although Third World countries adopted the BN approach, the economies of most of them, especially the Latin American (Edelman and Haugerud, 2005: 7), were suffering from inflation. To cope with the problem, they borrowed loans from private credit markets, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), but the oil crisis of 1970s further aggravated their economic situation. The situation turned into a crisis, when in October 1979, the president of the US Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, raised interest rates as high as 20% to curb the inflation in the US economy. Consequently, many developing countries became insolvent (Harvey, 2007; Hickle, 2012; see also, Boughton, 2001: 267-80) and thus ensued the ‘crisis of development’ (Salamon, 1994: 116). The causes of the crises were attributed to state-failure in developing countries. It was argued that state-centrism of earlier development planning had led to ‘big’ governments in
developing countries, whose bureaucracies were neither effective nor efficient in service delivery. Alongside these developments, the conservative politicians, Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US, came to power amidst economic recession. They attributed the causes of the problem to the crisis in the ‘Keynesian welfare state’ (Clarke, 2005: 58) by arguing that big governments had ‘led to financial and budgetary shortfalls’ (Rist, 2014 [1996]: 220).

To manage the crises, the conservative governments reversed the power relationship between the political and the economic realms, replacing Keynesian idea of state-management of the economy with an ideology that was arguably ‘... based on the inexorable truths of modern economics’ (Clarke, 2005: 50). Their agenda, which became known as neoliberalism, called for:

… a new discipline of labour and management to the benefit of lenders and shareholders; the diminished intervention of the state concerning development and welfare; the dramatic growth of financial institutions; the implementation of new relationships between the financial and non-financial sectors, to the benefit of the former; a new legal stand in favour of mergers and acquisitions; the strengthening of central banks and the targeting of their activity toward price stability, and the new determination to drain the resources of the periphery [i.e., the third world] toward the centre (Duménil and Lévy, 2005: 10).

In this laissez-faire approach, free trade was considered the best strategy to bring about economic growth and development (Weaver, 1995) and hence state intervention was heavily ‘skewed towards promoting, strengthening, and, on occasion, forming the interests of private capital in general and of finance in particular, the latter a particularly significant marker of the neoliberal era’ (Fine and Kyung-Sup, 2012: 314). The UK and the US governments – later followed in other OECD countries – took initiatives for the deregulation and privatisation of public industries (Harvey, 2007) and introduced New Public Management (NPM)
reforms to make services, such as health and education, purportedly, more efficient and effective (Brignall and Modell, 2000).

While these changes were taking place in the OECD countries, the recipe for solving the ‘crises of development’ in developing countries was concocted in the form of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). To help developing countries stabilise, regain economic growth and strengthen democracy, two solutions came to prominence. Firstly, the IMF and World Bank introduced Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), according to the terms of which developing countries were compelled to retrench the provision of public services and opt for privatisation to help generate economic investment and hence development (Chant and McIlwaine, 2009). The measures, which would be dubbed in 1989 as the *Washington Consensus* (George, 2007; McKay, 2013), comprised of the following:

… fiscal discipline and an end to deficits; reduced public expenditure and reordering of government priorities; tax reform; flexible interest rates; competitive exchange rates; trade liberalisation; a favourable environment for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); privatisation; deregulation; property rights (George, 2007: 5; see also Weaver, 1995).

Secondly, to curb the problem of ‘poor’ or ‘bad’ governance, the World Bank and a number of UN organisations promoted NGOs both to provide public services to the poor as well as to work for introducing and strengthening democratic processes. However, as will become evident in the next section below, while the former role would become more pronounced in the World Bank’s approach, the latter role of NGOs received major impetus from certain political developments during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Firstly, the anti-dictatorship movements in Latin America in the 1970s and in the 1980s (Eade, 2000; Howell and Pearce, 2001), anti-authoritarian movements against the socialist
governments in Southern and Eastern Europe (Anheier and Salamon, 2006) and subsequently the dissolution of USSR in 1989 (Feldman, 1997) popularised the powerful idea of ‘civil society’. As will become clear below, the concept of ‘civil society’ has of late become quite fuzzy (Bob, 2011; Edwards, 2011; 2014), but, at the time of those movements, it contributed to the popularity of NGOs as a space or a platform, which people could use to challenge state repression (Smith, 2011). Secondly, the unprecedented developments in communication technologies in 1980s and the rise of a sizeable number of urban educated middle class people in developing countries as a result of economic development during the 1960s paved the way for the popularisation of participatory development through NGOs (Salamon, 1994; Salamon et al., 2003).

The demise of the USSR was particularly elemental in popularising NGOs as means for democratisation in developing countries, particularly in the Eastern European states and those formed after the dismemberment of the USSR. For instance, according to Chand (1997: 544), in 1991 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to establish an Electoral Assistance Unit in the Department of Political Affairs to monitor elections in member countries. This paved the way for NGOs to monitor political activities side by side with the Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs). The mandate to work as watchdogs during elections in developing countries was based on the assumption that they ‘… possess the skills to organise private, voluntary associations and to teach those skills to people in societies where such associations have historically been treated with suspicion and, often, persecution’ (Ahmad and Potter, 2006: 105-6). Since the centralisation and abuse of political and economic power is one of the major problems of developing countries (Kuzwe, 2008), NGOs could potentially play a democratising role on many fronts as
... [counter to flaws] in the functioning of government machinery (red-tapism, apathy, collusion with vested interests, deliberate delay in decision making or its implementation et cetra) ... [they could] ... facilitate 'participatory management', encourage local initiative, maintain link with grassroots, reach the poor effectively, promote participation, react to any calamity immediately, remain accountable and cost effective, emphasise sustainability, remain responsive and committed to the cause of people, perform with greater efficiency and dedication and the like (Ghosh, 2009: 234; see also, Edwards and Hulme, 1995).

Democracy has been theorised in various ways. For instance, Guttmann (2007) has given 5 types of democracy, viz., (1) Schumpeterian, (2) populist, (3) liberal, (4) participatory, and (5) deliberative democracy while Taylor (2010: 241) has categorised it into 7 types in each of which NGOs can potentially play democratising role (see Table 2.1, p. 27). However, despite multiple interpretations of the concept, NGOs' role in democratisation in developing countries is often framed in terms of Western liberalist discourse on state and civil society (Mercer, 2002).

In liberal terms, democracy can be taken as a condition where a community exercises self-determination by taking decisions to shape their lives jointly ‘... with equal rights and opportunities of participation and without arbitrarily imposed constraints on debate’ (Scholte, 2002: 285). Thus defined, following Sørensen (2008), it can be said that in a society characterised by democratisation we will find increasing political participation or liberalisation as well as inclusiveness. NGOs can potentially perform various roles ranging from merely as substitute for government services to operating as watchdog to organise common people for 'rightful' actions against state and market injustices (Taylor, 2010). To elaborate this, I will refer to Weisbrod's (1975) public goods theory, which was though

\[2\] It should be noted that in real world, it is possible to see political competition without an equivalent amount of inclusiveness and vice versa (Hinnebusch, 2006: 274).
originally spelled about the emergence of NGOs in the market economy of the US, it nonetheless seems applicable to NGOs’ role in democratisation and grassroots empowerment in developing countries. Arguing from the precepts of classical economic theory, Weisbrod (1975) argues that markets are imperfect in terms of production and allocation of goods and services. For example, productive inefficiency can result from under-producing some socially worthwhile goods, restricting access to some or producing them in quality and/or quantity that differ from consumers’ demands (Steinberg, 2006: 119). In other words, markets occasionally fail by underproviding, over excluding and by not sharing information with the consumers. To cope with this, governments respond by regulating information flow, by directly providing goods to consumers and by mandating itself to provide the goods either by subsidising them or voucherising them. However, governments generally satisfy median voters’ demands and inadvertently exclude those who demand a certain good more than the average citizens. Hence, governments also fail. In other words, there will always be considerable heterogeneity in people’s demands to which neither the markets nor the governments are always able to respond. As a result, NGOs emerge to satisfy the unmet demands.

The notion of unmet demands or demand heterogeneity can be applied to NGOs’ role in democratisation in developing countries. Perhaps the appropriate way to make the theory applicable is by explaining Mercer’s (2002) review of literature on the relationship between NGOs, civil society and democratisation in developing countries. Mercer (2002: 8-9) has identified three central arguments in NGOs’ role in democratisation and strengthening of civil society. Firstly, being autonomous NGOs are considered to pluralise the institutional arena. The more and diverse they are the greater the opportunity for a variety of people to voice
their concerns to the state from NGOs’ platform. Secondly, since (presumably) they work with grassroots people’s organisations, they represent the interests of the marginalised groups and run campaigns on their behalf to influence public policy. Thirdly, they are a check on national and local state power by challenging it and by developing alternative perspectives and policies. In more general terms, we can say that NGOs contribute to the ‘input’ and ‘output’ processes in the political system (Zimmer, 2010): by engaging in lobbying and advocacy activities, NGOs contribute to the ‘input legitimacy of the political system’; likewise, by engaging in the effective delivery of vital social services such as health and education, they ‘… add to the output legitimacy of democratically ruled welfare states’ (Zimmer, 2010: 202-3). It is especially the latter for which NGOs were supposed to play a catalysing role by ‘enlarging political space for grass-roots change and generating alternative thinking and approaches to poverty alleviation’ (Lewis and Wallace, 2000: X). With these (assumed) characteristics, NGOs were expected to help people influence the functioning of state and market institutions in such a way that the resulting civil society would be characterised by equality ‘… or at least the active pursuit of equality in associational life and the public sphere’ (Kohn, 2011: 241-2). The agenda for strengthening the civil society also brought with it notions such as ‘social capital’, ‘empowerment’, and ‘capacity building’, each of which is discussed in the following section.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic Model</th>
<th>Model of Citizen</th>
<th>Mode of Operation</th>
<th>Role of the third sector (ascribed; espoused)</th>
<th>Roles of the state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Voter</td>
<td>Interest aggregation Representation</td>
<td>Residual, reducing reliance on the state campaigning; expressing excluded voices; meeting unmet needs</td>
<td>Upholding the rule of law and citizen rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Liberalism</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Offering choice as a competitor in the market; Informing consumer choices; Campaigning against the injustices of the market.</td>
<td>Minimal; ensuring the free movement of capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democracy</td>
<td>Voter</td>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Junior partner in the welfare firm; Watchdog; Campaigning; Expressing excluded voices, special and emergent interests.</td>
<td>Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralism</td>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Negotiation; Competition</td>
<td>Expressing, organizing and advocating for different voices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporatism</td>
<td>Institutionalised interest</td>
<td>Bargaining</td>
<td>Corporate partner; Watchdog; Campaigning; expressing excluded voices</td>
<td>Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associative/Communitarianism</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Anchoring democracy in participatory institutions; Generating social capital</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory/governance</td>
<td>Active and informed citizen</td>
<td>Deliberation; Communicative Action</td>
<td>A channel for citizen voices; Educator/information provider; Partner in policymaking and implementation; Critical friends</td>
<td>Coordinating and steering arbiter and facilitator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Taylor (2010: 241)*
2.2 NGOs as Agents for Strengthening Civil Society and ‘Alternative’ Development

This section elaborates upon the meaning of civil society and the subsumed concepts of social capital, empowerment and capacity building. It also highlights the scholarly contributions and approach to the project of building civil society in the global South as well as the neoliberal approach in this regard and the dominant trajectories in the growth of NGOs in the global South.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the popularisation of NGOs as means of strengthening ‘civil society’ coincided with political economic developments and the emergence of the neoliberal doctrine in 1980s (Eade, 2000). The scholarly critique of the modernisation model and the Basic Needs approach also contributed to their popularity. The development theorists and practitioners were disenchanted with both the failure of the modernisation theory and the BN approach as well as the poor performance of states in developing countries on vital fronts, such as education, health, political and electoral fairness etc. The notion of ‘another development’ in the Dag Hammerskjold Foundation’s conference on ‘what now’ (Potter et al., 2008) and Freire’s (2000 [1968]) “pedagogy of the oppressed’ significantly contributed in popularising the notion of ‘alternative/participatory’ development. Subsequent works, for example, by Korten (1980; 1984; 1987; 1990; see also, Brown and Korten, 1989), Chambers (1983), Coward and Uphoff (1980; see also, Uphoff, 1985; 1988) furthered the agenda of social change through NGOs. These scholars, along with a large number of others, emphasised NGOs’ potential to reach out to the poor, promoting participation and encouraging local initiative for the creation of a thriving civil society which, it was hoped, would result in the promotion of democracy and empowerment. In essence, this ‘political’ (Heyse, 2006: 18-9) or
‘radical’ (Edwards, 2011: 6) approach meant that ‘[b]y providing variety and autonomy in associational choice they [i.e., NGOs] promote the formation of interest groups that can challenge monopolistic tendencies and the poor performance of state enterprises’ (Bebbington and Riddell, 1995: 56). In other words, NGOs are supposed to harness civil society.

The concept of civil society has been theorised throughout human history from Greek philosophers to the present era (Ehrenberg, 2011: 15-25). In each epoch, though, the impetus for its formation and conceptual parameters has been different, reflecting the specific socio-cultural milieu of the relevant era (Calhoun, 2011: 311-23). In the development context of the South, the concept is invoked to either refer to society as a whole in contrast to state, or as an ‘intermediate sphere of social organisation or association between the basic units of society – families and firms – and the state’ (White, 2004: 8). Briefly defined, civil society means ‘… associational life, the good society and the public sphere’ (Bob, 2011: 209). In particular, the conceptualisation of civil society as ‘associational life’ has been dominant in development literature, the inspiration for which comes from de Tocqueville’s (1994 [1840]) treatise on ‘democracy in America’. He (1994 [1840]) conceptualised it in terms of the presence of a large number of voluntary associations, which worked above individuals’ primordial interests. Moreover, he believed that the profusion of voluntary associations ‘… enabled isolated individuals to cooperate for collective purpose despite the absence of aristocracy and the remoteness of the federal state’ (Whitehead, 2004: 23). Alongside this, the conceptualisation of civil society as a ‘public sphere’ popularised in 20th century through the writings of Habermas (1989; see also, Habermas et al., 1974). In his terms, a healthy civil society is one where individuals as citizens
communicate democratically and share issues of common concern in avenues ranging from

… micro public spheres of literary circles and book clubs, citizens’ juries and ‘deliberation days’, through public radio and television, independent newspapers, facilitated debates, referenda and deliberative opinion polls at the national level, to potentially global public spheres like the World Social Forum or public-access Internet sites such as that of open democracy, which bills itself as an arena for intelligent conversation in cyberspace between people of different and dissenting views (Edwards, 2008a: 57).

However, as alluded to above, the conceptualisation of NGOs as equivalent to civil society or its agents thereof became more popular. A major impetus for this ‘neo-Tocquevillian’ (Edwards, 2008a: 36) conceptualisation came from Putnam et al.’s (1993) work on ‘social capital’. According to Woolcock (2011: 197), civil society and social capital are broadly similar entities ‘… but former is considered a broader concept, which is operationalised at micro-level in terms of social capital. It is also appropriate to mention that Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman have also written about the concept but Putnam is a ‘widely recognised proponent of social capital’ (Field, 2008: 32).

Putnam et al. (1993) conducted research to compare the performance of regional governments in Northern and Southern Italy. He found that Northern region, scoring high on ‘trust’ and ‘civic engagement’, was highly stable, economically developed and had a more effective government than the Southern region. From this, he argued that voluntary association contributes to social capital building, which refers ‘… to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society facilitating coordinated actions’ (Putnam et al., 1993: 167). In a nutshell, according to Putnam et al. (1993), norms of reciprocity and trust are indispensable to economic and political development (Edwards, 2008a) in that, without them, ‘… contracts cannot be
enforced or compromises sustained’ (Anheier and Salamon, 2006: 93). Since the assertions were in consonance with de Tocqueville’s (1994 [1840]) observations about the presence of associations in the US as one of the factors in the growth of democracy there (Anheier and Salamon, 2006), it contributed to the popularisation of NGOs. There are four issues in what Fine (2010: 158-9) has termed ‘Putnamenology’. Firstly, there are no agreed methods for measuring ‘trends’ in social capital. Secondly, the findings do not replicate even in the same countries and regions where earlier studies were carried out. Thirdly, ‘… there is problem of omitted variables that condition both the presence and effects of social capital’ (Fine, 2010: 158-9). Finally, from the point of view of this research, granted that trust, norms and networks lead to or result in social capital, it does not always follow that the resultant ‘civil society’ would be characterised by processes of democratisation and/or economic empowerment. For instance, in 2008, as a result of the military campaign against the Taliban in Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan), an estimated 3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fled to find shelter in the adjoining districts, regarding which Young (2010: 36) observed:

> over 80% [i.e., 2400,000] of those forced to flee from their homes found refuge, not in camps but with private families or in other communal spaces. Some households hosted up to 100 people; many thousands took in complete strangers and offered them shelter. This is a great tribute to Pakistani society.

Even if it is argued that people always behave cooperatively in exceptional humanitarian emergencies, accommodating thousands of complete strangers – without primordial relationships – was still very high. Yet, despite such a phenomenal exhibition of trust and coordination, Pakistan is neither democratic nor economically developed. According to Lieven (2010), Pakistan has a strong society, but a weak state. Yet, despite theoretical and methodological
complications in the concept of social capital (Woolcock, 2011) and the broader notion of civil society (Bob, 2011), there began a burgeoning academic interest in the subject (Fine, 2010; Field, 2008).

Similarly, under the Washington consensus, NGOs also became more salient for their role in building social capital among the poor of the global South. To build ‘... trust, norms, and networks …’ (Putnam et al., 1993: 167) in the global South, NGOs also became salient for two additional roles and objectives, viz., ‘empowering’ local communities through ‘capacity development’ initiatives. Empowerment is a multifaceted concept that, in a development context, could be conceptualised both as a process and as an outcome of an effort for change. Keeping in view Lukes’ (2005) three-dimensional view of power, empowerment, in a development context, can be defined as,

... people’s ability to act through collective participation by strengthening their organisational capacities, challenging power inequities and achieving outcomes on many reciprocal levels in different domains: psychological empowerment, household relations, enhanced social capital and cohesion, transformed institutions, greater access to resources, open governance and increasingly equitable community conditions (Wallerstein, 2006: 19; see also Hennink et al., 2012).

NGOs became central to the agenda of altering the explicit and implicit structures of domination as well as the subtler hegemonic forms of power operating through ideological apparatuses. Furthermore, the 1990s also saw the popularisation of capacity building initiatives in both developed and developing countries (Craig, 2007) ‘to strengthen institutions of civil society as well as to address ‘social exclusion’’ (Diamond, 2004: 183). ‘Capacity’ is generally defined as the ability ‘... to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives’ (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002: 9), or the ability of a ‘... human system to perform, sustain itself and self-renew’ (Ubels et al., 2010: 4). In a development context, it came to be
conceptualised at two levels, viz., at the level of NGOs and at community level. Organisational capacity development means ‘… the process by which northern NGOs try to strengthen southern NGOs so that they come more sustainable organisations and are better able to carry out programmes’ (Hudock, 1999: 33) through ‘… greater sophistication of organisational processes, functions, and structures’ (Kaplan, 2000: 522). With regard to communities, it is usually defined as the process that entails developing poor people’s (1) sense of belonging and community, (2) commitment and (3) ability to solve their problems, as well as (4) the ability to access resources (Chaskin et al., 2001: 12). The popularisation of ‘civil society’ agenda and the associated concepts of social capital, empowerment and capacity building brought NGOs into the limelight, but much of this came from the World Bank and the UN family of organisations, particularly the UNDP.\(^3\) However, rather than emphasising (the assumed or real) intrinsic features of NGOs, their comparative advantages were highlighted as reasons for equating them with civil society and social capital (Bano, 2008a). Thus, while ‘civil society’ was originally ‘… a sociological counterpart of the market in the economic sphere and to democracy in the political sphere’ (White, 2004: 6), within the framework of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in the South, the World Bank and the UNDP particularly equated it with NGOs (Whaites, 2000). In other words, NGOs began receiving increasing support from the ‘instrumental’ (Heyse, 2006: 18-9) or ‘neoliberal’ (Edwards, 2011: 6) point of view. For instance, in its ‘operational policy note’ originally developed in 1981, the World Bank recognised the vitality of NGOs because they ‘… can make important contributions toward ensuring that the views of local people are taken into

\(^3\) It does need mentioning, however, that that these institutions do not always exclusively and narrowly take NGOs in instrumental terms. For example, UNDP (1990; 1994) considers NGOs pivotal in the process of participatory democratisation and development in developing countries.
account, promoting community participation, extending project reach to the poorest, and introducing flexible and innovative approaches' (World Bank, 2010: n.p.). Likewise, in its first human development report, UNDP (1990: 6) also puts a similar faith in NGOs in the South for their potential to bring participatory development because they ‘... are generally small, flexible and cost-effective, and most of them aim at building self-reliant development’. More recently, the organisation has asserted that ‘[c]ivil society constitutes a *third sector* [emphasis added], existing alongside and interacting with the state and market’ (UNDP, 2006: 3). The same report also emphasises that, until 1993, UNDP used the term NGO, but now it uses the term ‘civil society organisation’ (CSO). Interestingly, while the report mentions a wide variety of groups outside the state and the market to comprise CSOs, it defines them in terms, which have been often used for defining NGOs. That is, ‘CSOs are non-state actors whose aims are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power’ (UNDP, 2006: 3).

Conceptualising civil society as ‘... a space for the enforcement and enhancement of social, economic and political justice ... [and thus is a] ... healthy and necessary compliment to democracy’ (Ghosh, 2009: 229), the ‘new policy agenda’ of the 1990s, which combined neoliberal policies with the agenda of ‘good governance’, projected development NGOs as effective and efficient alternatives for strengthening democratic processes in developing countries (Bano, 2008a; Burnell, 1992). It was argued that voluntary organisations were better equipped to organise people and build trust, thus helping achieve the goal of democratisation and, subsequently, development (Bano, 2008a; 2008b). In fact, NGOs became not just ‘... indispensable instruments for the survival and sustenance of democracy, but also as the ‘hitherto missing key’’ (Sahoo, 2013:
In policy terms, donors further channelled development aid to NGOs (Edwards, 2006; Jenkins, 2001).

Alongside these developments in NGOs’ popularity with the World Bank, UNDP etc., their successful experiments in introducing innovative approaches in the delivery of services in the vital sectors such as health, education, and sanitation helped curb the negative effects of SAPs. This enabled them to lobby international donors and governments on behalf of the poor for specific interventions. They were also seen as effective and efficient partners with government agencies in the delivery of services. The inspiration for this appears to have come from the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) that primarily emerged as part of the neoliberal privatisation drive in the North and which often entailed joint ventures between the government and private business (Linder, 2000).

Since, under the increasing pressures of SAPs, governments in developing countries were also finding themselves constrained in providing services such as health and education, the World Bank (1997: 117) found PPPs between NGOs and governments/government departments as ‘… not just desirable but in fact critical to [the] success’ of improvements in service delivery. Similarly, scholars, particularly those collaborating with international donors, found them crucial ‘… in cultivating and representing such social capital, and in improving public services more generally’ (Brinkerhoff, 2003: 106; see also, Sansom, 2011). This is because they represented ‘… weak and marginalised groups, such as the poor and socially excluded, and they can build the capacity of these groups to more powerfully engage with actors from the other sectors’ (Brinkerhoff et al., 2007: 62).

Over the last three decades or so, NGOs have multiplied, scaled up and diversified to provide a variety of services. For instance, the amount of OECD aid
channelled through the NGO rose from 0.7% in 1957 to 3.6% in 1985 and at least 5% in 1993/94 (Hudock, 1999: 3). Similarly, the funds channelled through NGOs were about US$2.3 billion in 1993/94 (Hudock, 1999: 3) but, according to Hulme (1994: 253), the amount was more than US$4 billion for the period 1975-85. As of 2009, members of OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) ‘... channelled at least 13% of total ODA to or through NGOs’ (OECD, 2011: 5). As regards the size of the sector, it is estimated that, in 1992, there were 4000 NGOs engaged in development work in OECD countries and 10,000 to 20,000 NGOs in the global South (Edwards and Hulme, 1992b: 77; Edwards and Hulme, 2000: 44; for country-specific examples, see Edwards, 2008a: 21-22). Similarly, it is estimated that there are about 20,000 NGOs in the global South (Salamon, 1994: 111) and over 20,000 international NGOs operational globally (Davies, 2014: 1). In spite of the sizeable growth in the sector, though, the fervour with which they were supported gradually gave way to scepticism and cynicism about their role as change agents. Their value-based emergence and existence turned out to be more an assumption than fact based on firm evidence (Edwards, 2011). Quite early in 1990s, scholars expressed fears that, despite NGOs’ preponderance, ‘... the systems and structures, which determine the distribution of power and resources within and between societies …’ largely remained unchanged (Edwards and Hulme, 1992a: 13). In other words, they ‘failed to bring about more fundamental changes in attitudes and ideology, on which real progress ultimately depends’ (Edwards and Hulme, 1992b: 84). A number of factors have been identified to have limited NGOs’ role as change agents, which are discussed in the next section below.
NGOs’ potential as agents of change lie in the quality of relationships they establish with their communities (Fowler, 2011). The establishment of ‘good quality’ relationships, in turn, is dictated by the spirit of voluntarism (Brown and Korten, 1989), with democracy, participation and empowerment being its guiding principles (Bloch and Borges, 2002). However, as alluded to in the preceding section, these principles did become cornerstones for their popularisation and support (Bano, 2008b) but, in practice, a number of factors have been identified as limiting NGOs’ performance. Firstly, in practical terms, the notions of social capital and through it the strengthening of civil society are inherently complex, politically loaded phenomena. Putnam et al.’s (1993) work, for example, did turn out inspirational for NGOs’ engagement on ‘building’ social capital, but it was based on a ‘… depoliticised notion of civil society that was favourable to the market rationality of the neoliberal project’ (Sahoo, 2013: 259). Marxists have, in particular, keenly criticised NGOs. For instance, according to Feldman (1997), the various capacity-building projects of Bangladeshi NGOs, while apparently meant for women’s empowerment, are actually akin to producing a trained workforce for the capitalist transnational factories that were established after the implementation of SAPs. Poor people’s urge to join NGO(s)-run programmes derives from their need for tangible items rather than the empowerment agenda (Feldman, 1997). For similar reasons, Petras (1997) has termed those Latin American NGOs as agents of neoliberal imperialism that are dependent on aid from foreign donors. Those who are non-Marxists but are critical in their analyses of the outcomes of NGOs’ efforts for strengthening civil society have also identified issues, albeit in different terms. For instance, Abom (2004), in relation to analysis of NGOs’ efforts for building social capital in a Guatemalan city,
observes that, though women-members became self-confident and developed norms of reciprocity as a result of participating in NGOs’ activities, overall, the organisations contributed to producing dependency, alienation, ‘… jealousy and conflict among beneficiaries concerning the distribution of benefits’ (Abom, 2004: 350). Similarly, with regard to his analysis of Seva Mandir, an NGO in Rajasthan (India), Sahoo (2013) argues that using the language of social capital, it did organise rural people’s participation in development activities. However, they gradually turned into ‘consumers’ of NGO-delivered services. As such, people’s participation in development activities cannot be taken as equivalent to awareness about their development (Sahoo, 2013). Such issues are considered to have arisen out of a number of factors to which we turn below.

It has been shown in the preceding section that the concept of civil society is inherently multidimensional and complex (Edwards, 2008a) but most donors tend to narrowly conceive it as a space comprising almost exclusively of NGOs so much so that, in most cases, civil society organisations that would not enrol with donors are side-lined (Pearce, 1993). It is commonly held that organisations rooted in their values and own resources have characteristically higher correlation between their leadership as well as its staff-members’ commitment to organisational values (Bano, 2008a; 2012; Ghosh, 2009; Jad, 2007). However, this diminishes as NGOs begin to receive funds from Western donors. This happens because some NGOs begin chasing money rather than focusing on the actual work to be undertaken (Bano, 2008b; 2012). In addition to this, it is also believed that the exponential growth of NGOs began primarily due to the availability of funds rather than due to the opportunity to construct civil society (e.g., Ghosh, 2009; Jad, 2007; Zaidi, 1999). That is, most NGOs emerged to grab
the funds that Western donors offered for empowerment and strengthening of civil society processes.

Besides working on ‘strengthening’ civil society, which under donors’ influence has been mostly ‘palliative rather than transformative’ (Banks et al., 2015: 708; Edwards and Hulme, 1997), NGOs also began interventions that have been increasingly considered neoliberal in nature. NGOs’ enrolment into microcredit is often cited as the most vivid example about their becoming agents of the market economy (Fernando and Heston, 1997; Feldman, 1997). For instance, Devine (2003: 240) found Bangladeshi NGOs’ scale up of microcredit programmes at the expense of social programmes to be ‘deeply worrying’ because ‘[t]he poor … have been the primary benefactors in the initiative to secure NGO sustainability. It is not clear whether they have been the primary beneficiaries’. These observations bring up two issues. Firstly, perhaps owing to such tendencies, Edwards and Hulme (1992a: 80) feared that

... [NGOs’] large-scale service-delivery operations will be cited by multilateral assistance agencies such as World Bank, IMF, USAID, as evidence to support the ideological case for the reduction of the scale of public-service systems: this creates worries about the potentially negative impact of such a strategy on the poor majority who do not directly benefit from NGO operations.

NGOs’ increasing engagement in micro-credit and programmes for the achievement of MDGs along with their becoming partners with government seems to have confirmed Edwards and Hulme’s (1992a) fear. The second and most important consequence of NGOs’ enrolment into service-delivery has been the emergence and persistence of a number of contradictions between their values and their actual operations, which are summarised below.

Southern NGOs (SNGOs) often partner with Northern NGOs (NNGOs) for the implementation of projects and programmes which, in turn, receive funds from
multilateral and bilateral donors, such as the World Bank, the UN agencies, DFID and USAID. Donors prefer to keep the projects short and the outputs easily measureable (Hudock, 1999). They fund NNGOs in highly controlled and centralised decision-making systems for efficient and speedy disposal of outputs (Hudock, 1999). In turn, NNGOs impose almost the same criteria on NGOs in the South (SNGOs). Consequently, rather than delivering services according to the local needs and pace of people's involvement in development activities, SNGOs deliver things quickly to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness. In such a scenario, NNGOs do not, and perhaps cannot, notice any discrepancy between a project's aims and outputs because no downward accountability and feedback-mechanisms are in place (Power et al., 2002). Secondly, by incorporating into donor-led service-oriented activities, NGOs have been identified as tending more towards organisational survival (Devine, 2003) than towards keeping to their empowerment agenda or 'effectiveness' in service-delivery. By partnering with donors and NNGOs, SNGOs have been exposed to newer ideas and practices (e.g., social capital, sustainable development etc.) (Ebrahim, 2003). However, these, along with the goals and values of participation, democracy and empowerment, are considered to have become mere development jargon (Petras, 1997; Fernando and Heston, 1997; Feldman, 1997; Sahoo, 2013; Pearce, 2010), using which NGOs get grants and funds from foreign donors. Even if most NGOs do not use development jargon to get finance, their unequal relationships with donors/NNGOs have a number of implications, nevertheless (Brehm, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003). For instance, most of the capacity-building programmes for NGOs employ myopically conceived notions of civil society, social capital, and/or empowerment, often, in donors' terms (Wallace and Chapman, 2003). As a result, although SNGOs participate and dialogue with community members at grass-roots level, these processes tend to take on a
mechanical form. Thirdly, it is also frequently raised that values, such as
democracy, participation and empowerment, are difficult to practice, which has
become an insurmountable difficulty owing to NGOs’ general lack of
interpersonal and group skills, such as listening, dialogue, shared decision-
making (Bloch and Borges, 2002). Finally, owing to the compounding effect of the
above factors, the entire agenda of empowerment and democratisation becomes
fraught with significant limitations. As mentioned at the beginning of this section,
as value-based organisations, downward accountability is central to SNGOs’
empowerment role (Kilby, 2006), but despite having received training and
participated in capacity-building programmes, their reporting about empowerment
and grassroots change is characterisable as “accountancy” rather than
“accountability” (Edwards and Hulme, 1996: 968). Thus, “[t]he worldwide use of
logical frameworks and their derivatives among donors, as well as the
competitive nature of development contracting’ have made information and
reporting by NGOs ‘public relations activity’ which have ‘… homogenising effect
on NGOs – effectively transforming flutes and bassoons into clarinets’ (Ebrahim,

The foregoing review leads to some recurrent issues in the development work of
SNGOs. Firstly, rather than scaling up the process of democratic institutions, a
process of NGOisation has taken place (Banks et al., 2015: 709). NGOisation
refers to NGOs’ increasing engagement in the delivery of public services and
other tangible benefits (Hearn, 1998; see also Yacobi, 2007). Secondly,
NGOisation has pre-empted the originally enunciated agenda of grassroots
empowerment. Thirdly, they often treat community-members in a way that is
classified as patronage-based. Instead of becoming active in their own
development and raising their voice in defence of their rights, community
members are considered to have become ‘dependent’ on NGOs. In other words, they merely participate in NGO-run activities as ‘consumers’.

The above reservations and issues, while apparently valid, do not adequately address the concern as to how it is that NGOs, which were presumably comparatively better than state and market-agencies, ended up developing the above characteristics in a variety of development contexts. To be judicious, a plethora of writings has been produced since NGOs’ preponderance in late 1980s. However, most analysts do not provide detailed accounts of the historical evolution of the global and national political economy in conjunction with micro-level community and organisational factors that have led or influenced NGOs to take the current form. In the words of Pierson (2004: 252) ‘[w]e cannot understand the significance of a particular social variable without understanding “how it got there” – the path it took’. To put this in perspective, take the notion of ‘patron-based’ interventions as one of the defining features of most NGOs in the global South. As we saw above, existing studies do provide confirmative evidence of its presence in NGOs’ current operations. But there are no adequate answers if we question how NGOs took this direction. It can be argued that a certain type of dependency, apathy and patron-clientelism, existed in the community already, which was historically so ‘deep rooted’ that the institution of NGOs, instead of adequately addressing it, became its ‘agent provocateur’. For instance, according to Ranjha (2013: 88-9), in 1971, the Directorate of Social Welfare of the government of Sindh (a province of Pakistan) published an in-house report regarding the problems and prospects of its community development programme. It found that village level ‘community councils’ were dependent ‘… on external aid and were also exploited by their leaders, who had their own political interests’. This could have been, for instance, due to the
absence of adequate statutory rights of citizens and unequal and personalised service-delivery of state agencies, the agrarian social structure of Pakistan with (quasi-)patrimonial arrangements in the distribution of rights and responsibilities or the interplay of a number of processes in both the above as a result of which NGOs could not adequately address them. Similarly, in tandem with one or all of the above processes, the funding regime of NGOs, for example, in the shape of quantitative targets or short-term deadlines, might also contribute to patronage-based interventions and service-delivery. The analysis of these aspects, which this thesis argues have not been adequately dealt with, at least in the particular context of Pakistan, is pertinent to delineate the process of institutional genesis of the above practice(s) in NGOs’ operations.

Most analysts of NGOs, to borrow from Pierson (2004: 2), take a ‘snapshot’ view in their analyses rather than ‘moving pictures’. It does not mean that their analyses do not provide historical backgrounds to the cases(s) under consideration or do not consider the influence of history. However, the approach to history is a ‘study of the past … [,] … the hunt for illustrative material … [or] … as a site for generating more cases’ (Pierson, 2004: 4-5). Scholars who do adopt a historical approach in their analysis of organisational and institutional practices of development NGOs in the global South have picked questions different from those this thesis aims to address. For example, Ebrahim (2003) explored two well-known NGOs in India, Sadguru and Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) (India), to historically analyse learning processes in the organisations vis-à-vis changes in global discourses on development, their interdependent relationship with funders, their reporting and monitoring processes and processes of organisational learning. Similarly, Hilhorst (2003) multi-year ethnography of a Philippines-based NGO explored ‘… how actors in and around NGOs deal with
the local, international and global complexities that affect NGOs’ shapes’ and to analyse the processes of ‘NGOing’ in the organisation (p. 3-4). Tvedt’s (1998: 4) analysis of NGOs as ‘outcome of complicated processes where factors like international ideological trends, donor policies and agendas interact with national historical and cultural conditions in complex ways’ appear closest to the aims of this research. However, his (1998) analysis still begs the question as to how and why the ‘complexities’ have historically emerged and what form they took.

For similar reasons, researchers on Pakistani NGOs have also fairly neglected the analyses of the historically evolving interplay of global and national political economy factors with the micro institutional factors influencing NGOs. For instance, Key (1990) adopting a ‘strategic management perspective’, analysed the negative influence of political forces on the growth and strategies of indigenous NGOs in Pakistan. Likewise, Ali’s (2005) ‘critique of participatory development’ can be described, in Pierson’s (2004: 2) terms, as a ‘snapshot’ view of NGOs in that he has focused on the current practices of RDO to conclude that the agenda of participatory development has been co-opted by too much influence of donors. More recently, Bano (2008a; 2008b; 2012) conducted an extensive study to compare the performance of foreign-funded NGOs and local-charity based organisations she has termed Traditional Voluntary Organisations (TVOs). Employing multiple tools for data collection, she interviewed leadership of NGOs and TVOs, their staff-members, common members of society and donor-representatives to comparatively analyse the impact of foreign aid on NGOs’ commitment to their own values, potential to mobilise members and sustainability of their interventions. She (2008a; 2008b; 2012) did dwell on the historical evolution of some of the TVOs, which gradually enrolled into getting aid from foreign donors, but the focus was more on the ‘effects’ of aid on their
performance. Thus, the study left out historical analysis of community social structure, state-society relationships and macro features of the regime influencing NGOs. Finally, Patterson’s (2005) case study of a health NGO in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Pakistan) is thoroughly historical in approach. However, her focus is more on the evolution and adaptation of the management practices and dealing with community members to conclude that the NGO had thoroughly become sustainable in terms of developing longer-term professional relationships with donors and in terms of effectively delivering services to both Afghan refugees and local Pashtun population in its target areas.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

As stated in Chapter 1 (p. 9), this thesis explores the influence and implications of micro (community) social structure and donors as well as the global and national political economy on NGOs’ empowerment agenda. Furthermore, it situates the interplay of these factors, particularly, in their historical context. On the basis of the points highlighted in the last two paragraphs of the preceding section, this thesis argues that in order to understand the effectiveness and/or limitations of NGOs in the global South, it is central to explore the evolving context of the communities’ socio-cultural context and the political economy of state and aid regime in which they have been working to realise their empowerment agenda. In the particular context of Pakistani NGOs, the influence of these factors can be analysed by combining DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory regarding organisational isomorphism and historical institutionalists’ (e.g., Hall and Taylor, 1996; Pierson, 2000; 2004; Steinmo and Thelen, 1992) notion of ‘path dependence’ with the analytical category of ‘informal security regime’, originally developed in Gough et al. (2004). The following paragraphs explain the potentiality of each approach followed by specific analytical
categories that could potentially help us address the overarching research question presented in Chapter 1 (p. 9).

### 2.4.1 Combining Sociological and Historical Institutionalism

Although a sizeable part of social science scholarship had been ‘institutional’ in the past, what is now known as ‘sociological’ and ‘historical’ institutionalism has evolved as part of the larger ‘new’ or ‘neo’ institutionalist movement in the 1970s. Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) seminal treatise in the sociology of knowledge is considered to have inspired this, what Mahoney (2006) calls, the second wave of institutionalism (Peters, 1999). The movement began against the then dominant behaviouralism (Steinmo and Thelen, 1992) and rational choice approaches (Peters, 1999: 11-17). Thus, building on Berger and Luckmann (1966), the works of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1977) became the foundation for later scholarship in the area. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that organisations do not just adopt formal rules because they lead to ‘efficiency’. Rather, organisations design or adopt rationally designed structures because they have to qualify for the (socially constructed) institutionally defined criteria for what it means to be an ‘organisation’. Thus, operating procedures, job titles and roles are created or adopted according to the vocabulary prevalent in the institutional environment. Similarly, Zucker (1977), adopting ethnomethodological stance, argued about the duality of ‘institutionalisation’ as

... both objective and exterior. ... [That is human acts] are objective when they are potentially repeatable by other actors without changing the common understanding of the act, while acts are exterior when subjective understanding of acts is reconstructed as intersubjective understanding so that the acts are seen as part of the external world (Zucker, 1977: 728).
Subsequently, to mention just two, DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) typology of mimetic, coercive, and normative isomorphic processes (see below) in sociology and March and Olsen’s (1984) notion of ‘logic of appropriateness’, that is, the individuals’ tendency to assess their actions according to the socially constructed and shared organisational values, became influential in political science. More recently, according to Adams et al. (2005), a third wave of institutionalism has been in emergence since 1990s though this has been countered on the grounds that a ‘cultural’ turn might be underway in the movement, the approach is still as diverse as it was back in 1970s (Mahoney, 2006: 376).

Whichever the case, the movement has now branched off into a ‘cacophony of institutionalisms’ (Abrutyn, 2014: 6). For instance, Peters (1999) lists six varieties of institutionalism, namely, normative, rational choice, empirical, societal, international, sociological, and historical. However, Hall and Taylor (1996) and Steinmo (2008) note just three versions of historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalism while Amenta and Ramsey (2010) have added political institutionalism to the list as well. Despite the variety, though, institutionalists admit that a sharp distinction between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ institutionalism (Abbott, 1992; Dugger, 1990; Selznick, 1996) and a clear explication of the institutional arguments has yet to be presented (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Arguably, the central conceptual confusion arises from disagreements regarding the meaning of ‘institution’. It is emphasised that institutions matter in structuring human behaviour (Steinmo, 2008: 123). Beyond this, though, according to Steinmo and Thelen (1992: 15), institutions ‘explain everything until they explain nothing’. Jepperson (1991: 145), for instance, considers institutions to represent ‘... a social order or pattern [emphasis original] that has attained a certain state
or property…’ wherein order or pattern is defined as ‘standardised interaction sequences’. However, firstly, such a conceptualisation makes it difficult, especially in organisational analysis, to distinguish between ‘institution’ and ‘organisation’. For instance, Hall and Soskice (2001: 9) differentiate between the two by seeing institutions as ‘… a set of rules, formal or informal, that actors generally follow, whether for normative, cognitive, or material reasons, and organisations as durable entities with formally recognised members, whose rules also contribute to the institutions of the political economy’. However, in a country like Pakistan many voluntary organisations can be found which are not formally registered with an NGO or with the government, nor do they have written rules and regulations, yet they operate fairly ‘formally’ without any ‘formal’ members. In other words, since organisations can also be based on formal or informal rules and standardised sequences of interaction, one can ask ‘why do we need two labels for a single phenomenon, and if they are the same thing why are we talking about institutions at all?’ (Peters, 1991: 31). Secondly, all the versions of the approach are considered ‘structurally biased’ (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010: 15) in that they can explain stability and durability in institutions, but cannot adequately account for change or evolution (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010; Clemens and Cook, 1999). Nonetheless, the two concepts can be explicated in the following terms. Up until the 1980s, organisations were analogically taken as ‘machines’ that had fixed boundaries or as a ‘living organism’ with sub-systems or sub-components each of which were working interdependently with each other, but hardly influencing or being influenced by their ‘environments’ (Wright, 1994). From the new institutionalists’ perspective, however, organisations are ‘social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals’
(Scott, 2003: 11) while institutions are ‘humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction … [and] … reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life’ (North, 1990: 3-4). Building on this, it can be said that NGOs, as organisations belonging to the same field or area, might develop more or less similar policies, procedures and practices to achieve their goals. ‘Field’, or ‘organisational field’, defined as ‘… those organisations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognised area of institutional life…’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148), could analytically exhibit three types of ‘institutional isomorphic’ changes, viz., (1) coercive, (2) mimetic and (3) normative (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991). Coercive isomorphism is supposed to emanate from ‘formal and informal pressures exerted on organisations by other organisations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organisations function’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 67). Thus, in the case of Pakistani NGOs, it can be hypothesised that funders’ requirements (e.g., identifying specific reporting formats, approach to service delivery, timeline of projects etc.) as well as community members’ expectations (need for specific training, interventions) could be the sources of homogenisation in their development interventions. Mimetic isomorphism occurs when an organisation is uncertain about the efficacy of its own practices or goals and begins adopting the practices of organisation(s) considered ‘successful’. In this regard, it can be hypothesised that they copy the intervention practices of other ‘successful’ NGOs partly as a reason to demonstrate their own effectiveness or as means to develop ‘refined’ practices for the achievement of their goals. Lastly, normative isomorphism occurs as a consequence of the urge in a given organisational field to become more ‘professional’, that is ‘… the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work … [as well as] … to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy’ (DiMaggio and
From this perspective, an NGO might be following its empowerment agenda in certain commonly found ways, for example, by holding dialogues with communities and motivating them to form groups, out of the influence of other organisations working on the same issues and which, over the course of their history, have turned out isomorphic.

This brings up the question as to how might Pakistani NGOs have developed or followed one or all isomorphic processes. Using sociological institutionalism, we can explain the ‘form’ which the Pakistani NGO sector has taken on. However, it cannot explain political factors that might have influenced NGOs in developing one of the isomorphic forms (Ju and Tang, 2011). It calls for taking the role of history into account for organisational processes, which, this thesis argues, can be adequately understood by integrating the historical approach into the analysis.

Historical Institutionalists do not offer a specific theory such as DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory regarding organisational isomorphism or March and Olsen’s (1983) notion of ‘logic of appropriateness’ in the functioning of political institutions. It is largely considered an approach to explain institutional endurance (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010: 21-22; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Steinmo, 2008: 108). As such, it is considered to be standing between the rational choice and sociological versions of institutionalism in that it considers human beings as

*both* [emphasis original] norm-abiding rule followers *and* [emphasis original] self-interested rational actors. How one behaves depends on the individual, on the context and on the rules. … What the HI [historical institutionalist] scholar wants to know is why a certain choice was made and/or why a certain outcome occurred (Steinmo, 2008: 126).

Since there is no precisely stipulated theory, the approach is methodologically eclectic, allowing for the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Hall
and Taylor, 1996). Secondly, its explanations are context specific (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010: 23). This is due to the emphasis that, in addition to the enduring influence of institutions, political economy and ideas (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 942; Steinmo, 2008: 129-33) also play a role in the emergence and/or persistence of institutions in particular localities. The context-specificity of the explanations also derives in large part from its emphasis on the importance of history in the persistence of institutions (Pierson, 2004), which is often described as follows:

... when a government programme or organisation [– be it corporate, public or non-governmental –] embarks upon a path there is an inertial tendency for those initial policy choices to persist (Peters, 1999: 63).

On the surface, such a statement appears to be a truism hinging on rhetoric, which is usually pitched in the metaphor of ‘path dependence’. However, it is a powerful analytical tool the originality of which can be adequately explicated with the empirical case, which made it popular in the first place.

In the social sciences, the concept of path-dependence originated in the works of David (1985; 1986) and Arthur (1989; 1990) on the historically contingent character of technological ‘lock-in’. The popular and most frequently cited work of David (1985; 1986) explored the reasons for the persistence of the QWERTY layout in computer keyboards. The layout was originally designed for typewriters to keep those letters that were frequently used in the English language at a distance from each other and, thus, minimise the chances of jamming of the typewriter keys. However, when computer technology was introduced the production industries and the consumers kept on (and still keep) to the same layout despite it being known to be less effective in terms of typing speed than the alternative layout of the DVORAK, which has ‘long held most of the world’s records for speed typing’ (David, 1985: 332). This conception of historically
'contingent' character of technology to lock-in, even if it was inefficient, was a trailblazing idea in institutional economics. On the basis of cases, such as the one above, both David (1985; 1986) and Arthur (1989; 1990) argue that certain technologies have the tendency to lock-in, which is produced by processes they have dubbed as ‘increasing returns’. That is ‘[a] path-dependent [emphasis in original] sequence of economic changes is one in which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including happenings dominated by chance elements rather than systematic forces’ (David, 1986: 30). The popularity of path-dependence and increasing returns phenomena gradually led to their importation into social sciences, particularly political science (Pierson, 1994; 2000; 2004; Mahoney, 2006; Mahoney and Schensul, 2006; Thelen, 2003) and organisational studies (Schreyögg et al., 2011; Sydow and Schreyögg, 2013) to analyse institutional and organisational change. By the end of 1990s, the concept gained a considerable space in the academic fora. For instance, recently, in their analyses of databases of seven leading journals of management and organisation studies, Vergne and Duran (2010: 736-7) found that the number of articles on path dependence in organisations increased from 109 during 1998 – 2002 to 214 articles during 2003 – 2007. More recently, Ericson and Lundin (2013: 186) found 38500 hits for the search term "path dependence" on Google search.4

In spite of its popularity, though, like many of the social science concepts, there is no agreed-upon explication or indicators of path dependence. In non-economic terms, it has been broadly conceptualised as ‘the causal relevance of preceding stages in temporal events’ (Pierson, 2000: 252) and as ‘those historical

sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties’ (Mahoney, 2000: 507). Levi (1997: 28) is relatively more precise in describing it as ‘... once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice’. Institutional and organisational inability or difficulty to change practices and procedures is best captured in the concept of ‘self-reinforcing processes’, ‘increasing returns’ or ‘positive feedback’ (Pierson, 2000). Self-reinforcing sequences are ‘... characterised by processes of reproduction that reinforce early events...’ (Mahoney, 2000: 256). That is ‘... the probability of further steps along the same path increases with each move down that path. This is because the relative [emphasis original] benefits of the current activity compared with other possible options increase overtime’ (Pierson, 2000: 252). There are four (social) contextual factors in the entanglement of organisations and institutions in such a process: (1) large set-up or fixed costs, (2) learning effects, (3) coordination effects, and (4) adaptive expectations (Arthur, 1994: 112). In the domain of technology and its social context, large set-up costs mean that, once a production set up is established, the costs, overtime, would spread over to more and more outputs, thus decreasing the per unit cost of production (Pierson, 2000; 2004; Schreyögg et al., 2011; Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010; Sydow and Schreyögg, 2013). The ‘learning effects’ means that the more the workers and managers operate complex tasks, the more competent they become, thereby increasing efficiency by continuing use. It means that innovations are likely to be introduced in the same set of practices rather than in the entirely new field (Pierson, 2000; 2004; Schreyögg et al., 2011; Sydow and Schreyögg, 2013; Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010). The ‘coordination effects'
... build on the benefits of rule guided behaviour: the more actors adopt and apply a specific organisational rule or routine, the more efficient the interaction is among these actors. ... [over time] it becomes more attractive to adopt these rules the more other individuals follow these very same rules (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011: 324).

‘Adaptive expectations’ means that actors adapt in response to the expectations of others. People adopt practices and things by projecting about other people in their surroundings. According to Pierson (2000: 254), ‘projections about future aggregate use patterns lead individuals to adapt their actions in ways that help make those expectations come true’.

Thus far, the applicability of organisational isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991) to analysing NGOs has been demonstrated but path dependence has been explained in generic terms. Before demonstrating its applicability for this project, it appears relevant to explain Gough et al.’s (2004) ‘informal security regime’ framework as it explicitly argues about the path dependent nature of welfare processes and outcomes in countries like Pakistan. Therefore, the following section explains the analytical categories of the framework and demonstrates its applicability to addressing the research question vis-à-vis the concepts of ‘isomorphic’ processes and path dependence.

2.4.2 Applicability of ‘Informal Security Regime’

The ‘informal security regime’ is an analytical tool to compare the problems and prospects of welfare in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was originally developed by Gough et al. (2004) and subsequently further developed in Gough (2005), Wood and Gough (2006), Abu Sharkh and Gough (2010) and Gough (2013). Since the framework has adapted Esping-Andersen’s (1990) ‘welfare regime’ model that he developed for the analysis of
welfare in OECD countries, a brief mention of his work is in order before explicating the analytical categories of the three meta ‘welfare regimes’ initially proposed in Gough et al. (2004).

Based on his comparative analysis of a set of developed capitalist countries, Esping-Andersen (1990) presented three meta-theoretical categories of liberal, conservative-corporatist, social democratic ‘welfare regimes’. According to him (1990), under Western liberal frameworks, citizens have statutory rights for the protection of which it is mandatory for the state to provide a safety cushion to those who, for some reason, cannot compete or fail in the process of market-based competition under capitalist economic conditions. Since capitalism has the tendency to commodify every aspect of the production (of goods and services), those with little or no commodity of labour in the market to sell would supposedly suffer, for example, the illiterate, non-technical, the old, and/or the disabled. Thus state agencies come to rescue citizens. In addition to this, family also provides welfare support to individuals ranging between a central role in ‘conservative-corporatist’ and a marginal role in both ‘liberal’ and ‘social democratic’ regimes. Moreover, states, markets and households not only interact with each other in playing their respective roles, but the practice of social policies over time produce and reproduce inequalities characterised by path dependent development into (1) liberal, (2) conservative-corporatist, or (3) social democratic regimes.

To make the model applicable to developing countries, Gough et al. (2004) renamed and subsumed Esping-Andersen’s (1990) ‘welfare regime’ as ‘welfare state regime’ to comparatively analyse welfare in the developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America. They expanded the concept of ‘welfare regime’ into three ideal types of ‘welfare state regime’, ‘informal security regime’, and ‘in/security regime’ (Figure 2.1, p. 56).
### Figure 2.1: The Three Meta Welfare Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Welfare State Regime</th>
<th>Informal Security Regime</th>
<th>Insecurity Regime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant mode of production</strong></td>
<td>Capitalism: technological progress plus exploitation</td>
<td>Peasant economies within peripheral capitalism: uneven development</td>
<td>Predatory Capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant social relationship</strong></td>
<td>Exploitation and market inequalities</td>
<td>Variegated: exploitation, exclusion and domination</td>
<td>Variegated forms of oppression including destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant source of livelihood</strong></td>
<td>Access to formal labour market</td>
<td>A portfolio of livelihoods</td>
<td>A portfolio of livelihoods with extensive conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant form of political mobilisation</strong></td>
<td>Class coalitions, issue-based political parties and political settlements</td>
<td>Diffuse and particularistic based on ascribed identities: patron-clientelism</td>
<td>Diffuse and fluid, including flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State form</strong></td>
<td>Relatively autonomous state</td>
<td>‘State’ weakly differentiated from other power systems</td>
<td>Shadow, collapsed and criminal states with porous, contended borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional landscape</strong></td>
<td>Welfare mix of market, state and family</td>
<td>Broader institutional responsibility matrix with powerful external influences and extensive negative permeability</td>
<td>Precarious: extreme negative permeability and fluidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welfare outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Varying degrees of de-commodification plus health and human investment</td>
<td>Insecurity modified by informal rights and adverse incorporation</td>
<td>Insecurity: intermittently extreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Path-dependent development</strong></td>
<td>Liberal, conservative and social democratic regimes</td>
<td>Less autonomous path dependency with some regime breakdown</td>
<td>Political disequilibrium and chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of social policy</strong></td>
<td>Countervailing power based on institutional differentiation</td>
<td>Less distinct policy mode due to permeability, contamination and foreign actors</td>
<td>absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Gough (2004: 32)
This thesis particularly draws on the concept of ‘informal security regime’ to analyse the organisational and institutional factors influencing NGOs in Pakistan. However, before proceeding to critically assess its applicability, the three regimes types are discussed below.

The notion of regime as taken in the model is defined as ‘… a set of implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge’ (Krasner, 1982: 186; see also, Krasner, 1983). The concept of ‘welfare regime’ means ‘the entire set of institutional arrangements, policies and practices affecting welfare outcomes and stratification effects in diverse social and cultural contexts’ (Gough, 2004: 26). Within the framework of these overarching concepts, the family of ‘welfare state regime’ is ‘… premised upon capitalist economies, formal labour markets, relatively autonomous states and well-entrenched democratic institutions’ (Gough, 2004: 33). In contrast, the concept of ‘in/security regime’ has been theorised in the context of African countries (Bevan, 2004a) many of which are characterised by conditions of livelihood insecurity arising out of the interplay of powerful external forces and weak internal power players leading to conflicts and political instability (Bevan, 2004b). Such regimes

... are also zones which are not articulated into the global political economy as national economies, and which thereby experience highly unregulated market conditions and collusions with foreign capital, mediated by patron, warlord and comprador economic agents (Wood and Gough, 2006: 7).

It is relevant to mention that the typology was originally developed using cluster analysis of quantitative data for 12 countries (Gough, 2004: 38-9). Recently, based on the cluster analysis of 65 non-OECD countries, Abu Sharkh and Gough (2010: 46-9) and Gough (2013: 219-20) have further sub-categorised the concept
into the following: (1) ‘proto welfare states’ which are characterised by ‘relatively extensive state commitments to welfare provision and relatively effective delivery of services’; (2) ‘successful Informal Security Regimes’ (ISRs) are ‘… low middle income, with high growth rates, but … relatively undemocratic and unequal’; finally the two sub-sets of regimes comprise of ‘Failing ISRs’, which are either those that have (3) high illiteracy rates or with (4) high morbidity and mortality rates. Since this thesis adopts the notion of ‘informal security regime’ for analysing NGOs in Pakistan, I will therefore, explain it in detail below.

**Figure 2.2: Components of an Institutional Responsibility Matrix (IRM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Supra-national</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Domestic markets</td>
<td>Global markets, MNCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Civil society, NGOs</td>
<td>International NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>International household strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Gough (2004: 30)*

In contrast to the trio of state-market-family in the ‘welfare state regime’ theory of Esping-Andersen (1990), the ‘informal security regime’ is characteristically an ‘octagon’ comprising ‘community’ as the fourth institution providing welfare; each institution in the ‘octagon’ has both a domestic and international dimension (Wood and Gough, n.d.: 5) (Figure 2.2). According to Gough (2004: 15-48), an ‘informal security regime’ is characterised by the following features. Because capitalist development has not yet totally transformed developing countries, multiple forms of division of labour exist, which are characterised by the processes of exploitation, exclusion and coercion that permeate livelihood strategies, for example, share-cropping, bonded labour, expatriate remittances,
wages/salaries etc. In such an environment, along with formal political structure, ethnicity, region, caste, clan, kinship (i.e., ascribed status-system) significantly influence state as ‘…weakly differentiated from surrounding social and power systems’ (Gough, 2004: 30). Thus a wide range of formal and informal institutions exist, which are part of the Institutional Responsibility Matrix (IRM) with a domestic and an international dimension (Gough, 2004). On the domestic front, there is family, market, state and community (including civil society organisations and NGOs). Their international counter-parts are INGOs, IFIs, IGOs and TNCs, all operating as components of the IRM. Moreover, at the individual level, a peasant in an informal security regime has limited statutory rights, if any, as a citizen of organised polity. That is, while a peasant has ‘objectively identifiable’ needs, s/he has little power to claim rights to their satisfaction. Hence, his/her situation of deprivation and relative powerlessness is describable as ‘the phenomenology of insecurity’ (Wood, 2004: 52) characterised by processes of patron-clientelism and adverse incorporation (Gough, 2004). Therefore, no matter which type of division of labour s/he is in, there are ample chances for being exploited, coerced or excluded.

The notion of patron-clientelism refers to individuals' tendency to bypass or avoid formal legal rules in individual and collective transactions, such as voting, provision of job, employment, income-earning opportunities and services. A politician’s use of in-cash or in-kind resources to win elections and voters’ relative readiness to accept those would be a typical example of patron-clientelism. From the perspective of the theory, most poor people in a country like Pakistan resort to such behaviour. It brings them temporary relief but it also makes them vulnerable in the long run. For instance, politicians elected to local councils or the national assembly in such a process would hardly commit to legislation for the
socio-economic protection and wellbeing of the citizens. In other words, processes characterised by patron-clientelism result in ‘adverse incorporation’ of the people.

Two issues should be noted before we adapt this framework to the purpose of this thesis. The framework deserves appreciation for it constitutes the first ever attempt at adapting Esping-Andersen’s (1990) framework for comparative analysis of social policy in developing countries. However, while theoretically sophisticated, the framework has been developed entirely on the basis of statistical (cluster) analyses (Tang, 2005). Secondly, the typology of institutions is octagonal but discussion around path-dependent development of patron-clientelism is almost entirely focused on state-citizen relationship or relationships between citizens; it does not, for example, thoroughly and explicitly point out that the relationship between individuals and local/Southern NGOs (SNGOs) or SNGOs and their Northern counterparts and donors such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank might also be characterised by patron-clientelism.

The above analytical ideas are relevant for the purpose of this thesis in the following sense. Firstly, it invites the analysts to explore the types of ‘welfare’ measures that the rural poor might have been adopting for the sustenance of their livelihoods. Relatedly, the framework also calls for looking into not only the current livelihood-sustenance strategies of people, but to also explore factors in their emergence and persistence. These aspects of a community’s life can be explored by directly observing the rural poor and by interviewing them about various livelihood strategies. Along with this, the framework also invites us to dwell on the history of policy and practices of government with regard to the provision of services. Thus, the explorations into the history of micro (community-level) and macro (state-level) strategies can provide us with the evidence to chalk
out the genesis of prevailing normative patterns. Secondly, in conjunction with the preceding aspects, the framework also calls for exploring the factors that might have culminated in the emergence of the institution of development NGOs. To determine the precise characteristics of NGOs’ operations, the historical orientation of the framework can analytically contribute to our understanding of specific policies and procedures which development NGOs might have adopted over the course of their history as well as changes, if any, in their efforts for bringing empowerment to the lives of poor communities.

The framework alludes to the possibility that the established structured interests across the institutional responsibility matrix (IRM) might be path-dependent, but Gough et al. (2004) do not specify the conditions under which path-dependent (under)development could persist or change. According to Wood (2004: 56),

... the notion of path-dependent development has a broader applicability. Countries dependent on overseas aid or NGO-based provision or remittances from migrant labour or clientelist networks will develop group interests and alliances which act to continue and extend the private benefits these generate. Internal political settlements are harder to establish and less necessary when external funders provide much formal welfare.... This reinforces the informal security regime.

Since the approach is ‘unashamedly conceptual and theoretical’ (Gough, 2004: 31), it can analytically help us identify the characteristic features of institutional and organisational practices of NGOs that are non-empowering and non-democratic in practice. The framework, however, does not theorise in detail the conditions or processes through which institutional practices, for example, patron-clientelism, might be (re)producing and hence path-dependent in developing countries. It is for this reason that the DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) three-partite schema of isomorphism has been introduced above to help us in understanding the trajectories of path dependence.
The links between sociological and historical analyses, including Gough et al.’s (2004) framework, can be relatedly explicated in the following hypothetical terms. Development NGOs working for grassroots change and empowerment might have developed self-reinforcing processes. These might be either due to set-up effects, coordination effects, learning effects and/or adaptive expectations. Since ‘… organisations have strong tendency to persist once they are institutionalised’ (Pierson, 2000: 259), NGOs’ establishment and patterning in an environment of relative deprivation at the community level might have placed them to operate more or less in a similar manner owing to one or all of the isomorphic processes influencing them from their recent or remote past. These isomorphic processes might be difficult to change due to the self-reinforcing processes. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the extent to which some or all of these processes contribute to limitations in the effectiveness of development NGOs in the countries of the South, such as Pakistan. In order to determine if this was the case, an eight-month long qualitative case study of an NGO in Pakistan was undertaken, the details of which follow in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the emergence and persistence of NGOs in the global South as well as the factors that frequently affect their operations. The review of the ideological and political economy factors in NGOs’ emergence has demonstrated that, while they have received unprecedented encouragement with the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, they have also been subject to criticism. The chapter has highlighted that in ‘instrumental’ terms NGOs have been quite successful in introducing innovative service-delivery mechanisms and that this has been part of the reasons for significant financial support throughout the last more than three decades. The chapter has also
shown that the original mandate of NGOs to empower the poor through participatory approaches for change in people's lives has, however, been eclipsed by engaging more in innovative service-delivery primarily because of the retreat of public agencies as a result of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) and because of the emphasis placed by the Washington consensus on NGOs as comparatively better than state agencies. Through the literature review, it has been demonstrated that instead of wholeheartedly pursuing a pro-poor agenda, NGOs are considered to be experiencing a number of barriers frustrating their efforts in these regards. These barriers exist at the organisational level as well as in the broader institution of NGOs as a whole. It has been demonstrated that NGOs are typically considered in the literature to be often dealing with community members in a traditional patronage-based manner. Moreover, instead of instituting change-oriented processes at the community level, NGOs suffer from introducing ‘dependency’ among them.

While acknowledging this contribution of the existing literature, the chapter has identified theoretical and methodological limitations of most of the critiques of NGOs, particularly those examining Pakistan. The chapter has argued that, in order to better understand the factors that influence NGOs' efforts for democratisation and empowerment, there is a need to adopt a historically grounded approach. To describe the relevance of historical analysis, the chapter has argued in support of adopting and combining the sociological ideas of DiMaggio and Powell (1983; 1991) regarding organisational isomorphism, the historical institutional concept of path dependence with Gough et al.'s (2004) framework of ‘informal security regime’. The adoption of the analytical ideas is based on the premise that existing researchers identify limitations of Pakistani NGOs by focusing mostly on processes and issues in their present contexts. In
contrast, it has been shown that the theoretical approaches of Gough et al. (2004) and path-dependence theorists (e.g., Pierson, 2000; 2004) can provide us with an enriched understanding of not only the factors that influence NGOs’ efforts for social change, but also the organisational, community-level and broader regime-level factors that have had reinforcing effects over the course of their history. Such an approach calls for collection of data from both the NGOs and their service-recipients about their relationships in the present and the past. Along with this, the approach also requires us to explore the history of the patterns and trends, if any, in the evolution of NGOs’ practices for social change. These theoretical considerations were employed using a variety of data collection tools, a methodological discussion of which follows in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 – Methodological Strategies Adopted in the Thesis

3.0 Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis set out my research agenda. It described the aims of the thesis and formulated the research question, which, in essence, explores the factors that might have influenced RDO since its establishment in the 1990s. The research question and sub-questions specifically identified the exploration of the influence of community-level and wider politico-economic factors in funding environment and state policies on NGOs’ work for the empowerment of the rural poor. Subsequently, Chapter 2 of the thesis reviewed the existing literature about the rise and persistence of NGOs as well as organisational and institutional factors that have been positively and negatively influencing their efforts for social change. The chapter specifically highlighted the theoretical and methodological limitations of existing studies to argue that an institutionalist approach can help better understand the factors, which over the course of NGOs’ history, might have been influencing their agenda for pro-poor change.

This chapter describes in detail and justifies the methods used during the 8-months long fieldwork, researching RDO, an NGO in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan), in order to address the research questions set out in Chapter 1. The chapter begins with a reflective account, offering a rationale for the adoption of multiple theoretical frameworks, which originally informed field-strategy for some period over the course of the fieldwork. Keeping Argyris and Schön’s (1996) theory regarding ‘organisational learning’, Lipsky’s (2010 [1980]) theory regarding ‘street-level bureaucrats’ and institutional arguments of, for example, DiMaggio and Powell
(1983), Pierson (2000), Gough et al. (2004), it was originally planned to collect data from two organisations. The rationale for the adoption of multiple case studies along with a brief introduction of the area where the case study organisations were located is also presented.

Following this, the chapter presents an account of the process of accessing RDO. There are two reasons for the detailed description. Firstly, it demonstrates how the NGO guarded itself from ‘outside’ researchers. Secondly, it shows the ‘level’ of access that I eventually gained at the organisation. The chapter then goes into the description and reasons for ultimately conducting a single ‘extended’ case study of RDO. The section describes and explains the decisions that were taken with regard to the delimitations of the case study and brief specificities of the two projects that were sampled for data collection. After these preliminaries, the chapter introduces the tools of data collection, viz., observations, interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and documents. The chapter also provides justification for their use as well as their relevance to the research questions that this thesis addresses. The final section of the chapter describes the ethical considerations that guide the overall research strategy, including the approach used for data collection and the reasons for the format in which the data is reported in this thesis. It also presents a brief account and the reasons for the dilemmas that were encountered during the fieldwork as well as the ethical issues that have arisen while conducting the data analysis and during the writing up stage of this thesis.

3.1 Researching NGOs: Theoretical and Methodological Choices

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1 (p. 7-8), this thesis began exploring a number of theoretical approaches, namely Lipsky’s (2010 [1980]) street-level bureaucrats, Argyris and Schöns’s (1996) concepts of single-loop and double-loop learning, and
DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983, 1991) theory of isomorphic processes in combination with Gough et al.’s (2004) notion of ‘informal security regime’ and path dependence (e.g., Pierson, 2000). The rationale for adopting this ‘bricolage’ of disparate concepts drew on the understanding that researchers can only capture some aspects of ‘objective reality’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 7). As such, instead of picking one theory and remaining analytically sequential and linear (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), the concepts were planned to be used as tools for understanding and capturing the meaning of simultaneously occurring phenomena. Thus, in terms of Lipsky’s (2010 [1980]) work, the research aimed to empirically explore how far the field-staff translated the policy and goals of the organisation or projects in their own terms and how they normatively rationalised deviation from organisational policy and regulations. Moreover, it aimed to examine what implications could such practices, if any, have for the organisation and the community members. Similarly, from the point of view of Argyris and Schön’s (1996) typology of single loop and double loop learning, the aim was to assess if the organisation had community-oriented feedback mechanism through which the field-staff could freely communicate people’s problems and wishes. In this regard, the fieldwork also aimed to assess whether the organisation had been transforming its vision, goals and operational procedures in the light of feedback mechanism. Thirdly, in terms of historical institutionalism in general (e.g., Pierson, 2000) and particularly Gough et al.’s (2004) notion of ‘informal security regime’, I wished to explore if the NGO-community relationship, intra-community relationships, and NGO-donor(s) relationships were ‘normatively’ characterised by ‘fairness’ or, as Gough et al. (2004) suggested, by ‘patron-clientelism’. If this were to be the case, then it was planned to undertake an historical analysis and identify the factors that might have been critical ‘enough’ to put the organisation on a certain ‘path’ from which it was hard, if not impossible, to lock itself out (Pierson, 2000). Moreover, in tracing the
process of change in the organisation, the aim was to explore ‘... not only what happened, but also on how it happened’ (Vennesson, 2008: 233).

Collecting data from the perspectives of such disparate but related theoretical repertoires called for the use of a range of data collection tools. The case study approach seemed most appropriate as it offered the flexibility to make use of observation, interviews, focus groups and documentary data (Simons, 2014; Vennesson, 2014; Yin, 2013). Secondly, a case study approach was also quite relevant for conducting historical analysis of the factors that could have influenced the organisation in question (Yin, 2013: 19). Thirdly, the methodological selection also allowed for evaluating the theories (Vennesson, 2008: 227-8) that informed the conceptual framework of this research. Finally, case studies can be single or multiple but where possible, the application of multiple case studies can yield data characterised by breadth that can be used for comparison and contrast (Yin, 2013).

With these theoretical and methodological preliminaries, it was originally decided to conduct fieldwork at the Sungi Development Foundation (SUNGI) and Rural Development Organisation (RDO), both of which operated in a number of districts Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province located in the North West of Pakistan (Figure 3.1, p. 75; Figure 3.2, p. 76). The decision to sample KP for data collection emanated from ethno-linguist considerations. According to the Government of Pakistan (GoP, 2016: n.p.), 73.9 % of the population in the province speaks the Pashtu language. Since the researcher shared the same ethno-linguistic background, it was convenient to undertake fieldwork in the KP. Secondly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, I had some prior experience of visiting a few NGOs in and around Peshawar, the capital city of the province. Thus, it appeared fairly easy to conduct fieldwork in the KP than in other provinces as the few acquaintances in NGOs and colleagues at the University of Peshawar (Pakistan) could help with
accessing the organisations. Finally, no updated, online or in-print, database was available (ADB, 1999; Ghaus-Pasha et al., 2002; Naviwala, 2010) from which a sample of ‘appropriate’ organisations for the case study could be selected. It was decided to collect data at those organisations, which had operated for quite some time, had diverse portfolio of services and considerable geographic outreach. RDO and SUNGI satisfied these criteria as both organisation had been operating for more than two decades and both had scaled up in terms of geographic outreach and programmatic diversity (RDO, 2016; SUNGI, 2014). It was decided to first begin fieldwork at RDO because its headquarter was located less than 8 Kilometres away from the University of Peshawar (Pakistan) where I had ready access to office facilities. It was planned that, once some progress had been made in the fieldwork at RDO, then SUNGI would be approached for grant of access. However, for reasons that would become clear in the section below, it was eventually decided to collect data only at RDO.

3.2 The Process (and politics) of Accessing and Sampling

In early September 2013, a request to the organisation (Appendix 3) along with an abridged version of the research proposal was emailed to the General Manager (GM) and three senior managers of RDO to gain official access to the organisation. The request was sent to the organisation as from a ‘PhD researcher from the University of Warwick’. However, when no reply came after 3 weeks of sending the email, the strategy for accessing the organisation and the identity of the person requesting access as researcher were revisited. Firstly, it appeared that, like most organisational researchers, I had to ‘endure long and often unsuccessful vetting by mostly suspicious managements before’ (Crompton and Jones, 2013 [1988]: 68) fieldwork could commence. Secondly, since NGOs are often secretive about sharing information with outsiders (O’Reilly and Dhanju, 2010), it appeared wise to
switch my identity to ‘researcher/professor’ from the University of Peshawar’, rather than to have to wait, perhaps indefinitely, as a researcher from Warwick University. Since ‘professors’ are by and large socially respected, the changed identity could also help in developing ‘good field relations’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 68). Thus, adopting an ‘opportunistic’ stance (Buchanan et al., 2013 [1988]: 53), Mr. Jumma, Business Coordinator of RDO, was approached through a colleague at the University of Peshawar who assured that he would put up my documents to the GM for official access to the organisation.

3.2.1 Negotiating Official Access to the Organisation

On 11 November 2013, Mr. Jumma sent a message through my colleague that the GM wanted to meet me at 1 pm that day. After reaching the head office instantly, the office gatekeeper readily escorted me into the receptionist’s office who almost peevishly said:

\textit{Saybaan}^6 busy de \textit{[the officials are busy]}!

--- Receptionist (age: 50s), male

Culturally, such a statement, especially when made to a stranger, often means ‘get out and wait for your turn’. It was a little ‘discomforting’, and its cause believably lay in the dual identities I was carrying and the inadequate planning for dealing with such contingencies. As a ‘researcher’, it should not have been bothersome to be treated ‘casually’ but, because I introduced myself as ‘professor’, being told off to wait felt difficult to accept. While brooding and thinking of finding an ‘appropriate’

\footnote{Culturally, it is quite common in Pakistan to address a college and university teacher as ‘professor’, irrespective of the hierarchical position.}

\footnote{\textit{Saybaan} is the plural of \textit{Sayb}, a Pashtu variant of the Urdu (the official language of Pakistan) word \textit{Saahb}, meaning ‘mister’.
exit from the office questioning myself, ‘where would I go as there is no place to sit and wait,’ I met Mr. Naqvy, who would later turn out to be one of the prime ‘link’ persons (Buchanan et al., 2013 [1988]: 60) in the fieldwork. He graduated from the University of Peshawar and was working in RDO as Funds Manager. Grabbing the opportunity for rapport building, I engaged with him regarding the opportunities for data collection at RDO. He reassuringly offered help and support in data collection. Cognizant that organisational employees can be informants as well as gatekeepers (Bulmer, 2013 [1988]; Crompton and Jones, 2013 [1988]), the opportunity was utilised to not only develop a good relationship with him but also to enquire about the possibility of accessing staff-members at different levels. This concern drew out of the general observation that even when ‘official’ access is granted, a researcher might still have to request people at different levels to access them in person (Mason, 2002: 140-3). As an ‘informant’, he told me that the GM, members of the Board of Governors (BoG) and programme managers of RDO were holding a meeting at that time with senior officials from a donor to discuss a new project. Likewise, as qualitative researchers have frequently highlight the role of luck and serendipity (Bryman, 2013 [1988]), he also introduced me to a few officials of RDO who had come to attend the meeting; the occasion provided the opportunity to network with some of them, a couple of whom later turned out to be quite cooperative.

While waiting for the GM’s meeting, I observed for the first time that, like most development organisations, RDO had ‘... highly evolved mechanisms for filtering and regulating flows of information’ (Mosse, 2001: 176; see also O’Reilley and Dhanju, 2010). The top management appeared more intent on following ‘official’ procedures in information dissemination than the middle management or the field staff. For instance, while sitting with Mr. Jumma, I asked him if I could obtain a few
printed documents of RDO as those available on-line were non-downloadable and it was really difficult for me to read for long on computer screen. He instantly refused, stating: ‘only, after the GM has given permission!’ While he was passing this statement, Mr. Naqvy looked at me rather mischievously, and soon after Mr. Jumma left the room, he sneaked out of the reception office for a brief moment and returned instantly with some documents, twitching his eye (to signal secrecy) he gestured to put the stuff right away into my bag.

It should also be noted that Pakistani NGOs, particularly in the KP, might be slightly more secretive about information sharing with ‘strangers/researchers’ in the peculiarly insecure situation arising out of the alleged involvement of Save the Children in the killing of Osama bin Laden (Shah and Cassidy, 2012). Mr. Naqvy pointed this out when I complained:

    my friend, we [public organisations] are notorious as bureaucratic and red-tapist but RDO seems to be similar to us.

Speaking high of the GM, he replied that RDO had grown quite big. Due to the burden of managing many things daily, along with the security issues after the Bin Laden case, the management was being careful in dealing with ‘outsiders’.

The opportunity for meeting the GM came at about 1600 hours. It soon turned out that I had not paid ‘enough’ attention to Thomas’ (1995) advice regarding interviewing business elites. According to him, researchers

    … must separate out the person from the role and the role from the formal context within which it is acted out. Such awareness, however, is difficult to achieve and sustain for ideological as well as methodological reasons. The setting, the person, and the organisation can overwhelm the researcher … (Thomas, 1995: 13).
My identity as a ‘professor’ placed me in an uncomfortable situation to interact with the GM. In retrospect, my inability to separate my role as a ‘researcher’ and as ‘professor’ on that occasion, along with the inability to separate the role of the GM from the person I was dealing with, made my tone slightly blunt. However, as accessing organisations is often the ‘game of chance’ (Buchanan et al., 2013 [1988]: 56), on the whole the meeting turned out positive. The meeting began with a moment of silence in which he (supposedly) looked at my research proposal and request for access to the organisation. After a while, the GM enquired about the aims of my research as if he knew nothing about my earlier requests (of [1] 20/09/2013 and [2] 22/10/2013). I handed him another copy of the research proposal and replied in a rather dry (and unwise) manner that my research was ‘inductive, qualitative and ethnographic’. He vehemently said that there were ‘public scripts’ and ‘private scripts’ and that he was not sure how the distinction between the two would be maintained. He was also anxious, or perhaps uncertain, as to how non-disclosure of the ‘private text’ would be ensured. Then, skipping to the bibliography section of the research proposal and pointing out Settle (2011), who has critiqued the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), an NGO in Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan), as contributing to the weakening of political rights of the citizens while using the rhetoric of participation and empowerment. Referring to her work, the GM remarked:

I don’t understand this. These [her observations] are questionable; better torn to pieces … DFID [Department for International Development] and other donors quote such works [in their dealings with NGOs] … many researchers come and go away with data, with their own agenda and future to build…

I realised the folly to have cited ‘critical’ literature on NGOs and wished to have carefully drafted a completely descriptive ‘non-critical’ aims of the research. Although I had drafted the abridged version of the research proposal around Argyris
and Schön’s (1996) concept of organisational learning, there were a couple of references to the critical literature, which, at that moment, were not doing me any good.

The GM continued castigating Settle’s (2011) work. He remarked that the work of Smillie and Hailey (2000) was ‘very good and logical’. Smillie and Hailey’s (2000) work was donor-funded research, in which they conducted a case study of 9 NGOs in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. To pacify him and magnify the ‘non-critical’ and ‘non-political’ nature of the research, I referred to the works of Ebrahim (2003) and Hilhorst (2003) on NGOs cited in the research proposal. Ebrahim’s (2003) work is on the local and global trajectories of learning in Southern NGOs and Hilhorst (2003) adopting Long’s (1992: 16-43) ‘actor-oriented approach’ analysed the day-to-day operations of ‘NGOing’ in a Philippino NGO. As if he was tracing the flow of my thoughts, the GM asked:

What is going to be your framework? How are you going to assure that the study does not project a totally negative picture?

Reckoning the deal almost at hand, I readily said that I could sign an agreement with RDO according to the terms of the organisation. I also offered to share a copy of my thesis with RDO for possible feedback. The offer drew from pragmatic and methodological concerns. According to O’Reilly and Dhanju (2010: 286), ‘[f]eedback and dissemination are not prioritised within academic institutions …’. So, by offering to share my findings with the organisation, I hoped that it would not only help in gaining access, but might also give an opportunity to see the management’s response to the findings of the project. The GM gave verbal approval and asked the sitting managers to chalk out the details of the agreement with me. Thus, after the exploration of the resourceful and cooperative Mr. Naqvy, networking with RDO
officials and meeting the GM, I eventually signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) with the organisation on 22/11/2013 (see Appendix 4).

Figure 3.1: Map of Pakistan

Source: http://www.ezilon.com/maps/asia/pakistan-physical-maps.html
Figure 3.2: Fieldwork area in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province

Source: http://www.alhasan.com/sites/default/files/0001_45.png
3.3 Sampling Strategy and Delimitation of the Study

When the fieldwork began in November 2013, it soon became clear that RDO was one of the biggest NGOs in Pakistan, as it was running multi-million US$ projects in a number of districts and was engaged with a diverse array of donors and implementing partners (Northern NGOs). It was decided to focus on an in-depth study of RDO only, which was based on a number of considerations. Firstly, SUNGI’s original and primary field sites were in the cities of Abottabad* and Mansehra†, which were about 150 Kilometres away from Peshawar. Secondly, a significant number of people there spoke the Hindko language with which I was not acquainted ‘enough’ to understand the proverbial expressions. Additionally, the literature on research methods points out convenience as an important element in sampling strategies (Bryman, 2012). Finally, the enormity of RDO and the negotiation of access that meant that I was almost free to select from a variety of projects and field sites there, also made including SUNGI a less attractive option. Caught in the dilemma of developing ‘depth’ versus ‘breadth’ in the data, I opted for the former to maximise the excellent access that RDO had allowed.

The next methodological decision to be made was to define the boundaries of the case study organisation (Simons, 2014: 11). The simple concept of ‘case’ is subject to various interpretations (Ragin, 1992). In this project, the approach to ‘casing’ (Ragin, 1992: 217), that is, the process of delimiting the boundaries of the case study, was theory-driven because ‘… a case has no significance unless referred to a precise, coherent theory or method’ (Wieviorka, 1992: 163; see also Vennesson, 2008: 126-7). Keeping the conceptual framework in view, Markowitz’s (2001) advice

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* See section 3.8 for the use of asterisk (*) here.
was followed: ‘[f]ollowing project trajectories offers a way to follow the expression of ideas about development or, more broadly, about salutary social change from donors to stakeholders’ (Markowitz, 2001: 43). That is, to explore and observe the current objectives and practices of the organisation for social change, it was decided to select from currently operational projects, which would hopefully help in identifying factors and issues that could be put up for exploration in the interviews, observations and documentary analysis. Furthermore, the preliminary analysis of the projects’ documents could also provide insights about issues and complexities, which could be pursued while analysing the historical narratives of the senior and experienced members of staff.

At the time of the fieldwork, there were 29 projects that were either recently concluded, just about to conclude or still operational. Some of the operational projects were shorter in duration (e.g., less than 2 years) and others were longer-term (e.g., 2-3 years). Keeping in view the research questions and the theoretical frameworks, the fieldwork was particularly geared towards the exploration of the evolution of RDO’s Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach (see Chapter 5, p. 134-50). This could hopefully allow tracing the local (community level) and organisational as well as the macro national and global factors influencing the goals and practices of the organisation. Relatedly, data collection was also aimed at exploring the present and past practices with regard to RSP-driven goals of the organisation as well as the process of staff-members’ interaction with the community-members. With these considerations in view, it was decided to collect data regarding the long-term projects. The following were the longer-term projects: (1) The Agridevelopment Project (TAP), (2) Livelihood Development Programme (LDP), (3) Programme for Emancipation, Activism and Community Empowerment
and (4) Livelihood Advancement Project (LAP). From these, TAP and LDP were sampled, the reasons for the selection of which are given below.

### 3.4 Sampling of Projects for Data Collection

The selection of The Agridevelopment Project (henceforth, TAP) for investigation was in part based on convenience sampling (Bryman, 2012: 201) and partly on the basis of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 2004 [1967]). According to the agreement signed with the RDO, I was required to liaise with one of the top managers at the head office regarding the project(s) and specific sites I intended to visit. Since Mr. Naqvy had already expressed willingness to support me with data collection, I conveniently sampled TAP and liaised with the head office regarding my decision. There was also an important conscious element in the decision to select TAP. Until the beginning of the fieldwork, I had not read much around the philosophy and practice of RDO’s Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach. The reason for this was the limited availability of documents on the website.

The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) began in October 2012 with the aim of increasing farmers’ productivity and efficiency by introducing them to modern farming techniques and technologies (RDO, 2012: 3). It was operational in the three districts of Hall, Fall, and Gall (Figure 3.2). The agriculture-only focus of the project appeared advantageous as it could give the opportunity to learn around the theory

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8 It should be noted that Glazer and Strauss (2004) originally recommended ‘theoretical sampling’ for developing grounded theory but instead of going to the field with a ‘tabula rasa’ I already had some analytical ideas to test and choose from during the fieldwork.

9 The online documents could be read on a computer screen, but could not be downloaded. Recently, RDO has revamped the technical layout of the website and many of the documents, such as the annual reviews, external/internal evaluations of the projects and project briefs that I had accessed after a good number of efforts are now downloadable for free.

10 These are fictional names of the three districts where almost the entire fieldwork was conducted. For the rationale of using fictional names for the cities and other aspects of the data, see Section 3.8 below.
and practice of the RSP approach while just having to focus on a relatively simpler project.

When the fieldwork began in November 2013, I also looked for additional opportunities to extend the fieldwork to non-agricultural interventions. The motivation to extend fieldwork to other interventions was based on Burawoy’s (1998) notion of extended case study design. The turn towards extended case study evolved serendipitously during the course of the fieldwork: The categories of historical institutionalism foreshadowed as the analytical interest in exploring historical contingencies in organisational evolution grew stronger. Simultaneously, the focus on Lipsky (2010 [1980]) and Argyris and Schön (1996) was eclipsed as the fieldwork direction turned towards the exploration of local (community level), national and global forces influencing the organisation. Relatedly, the analytical interest also revolved around understanding how the employees at various hierarchical levels and with varying experiences as well as the community members viewed the process and implications of change in the organisation. Thus, in January 2014, I learned that another 3-years project, the Livelihood Development Programme (henceforth, LDP), operational in the same districts as TAP, had diverse interventions in the areas of (1) community physical infrastructure, (2) natural resource management, (3) enterprise development, (4) human resource development, and (5) microfinance (RDO, 2009: 3). This meant that I could draw on the observations and interviews from TAP and theoretically sample (Glaser and Strauss, 2004 [1967]) interviewees, observational sites and documents in LDP. LDP was also theoretically significant as, in contrast to TAP’s exclusive focus on male farmers, its microfinance services were primarily meant for women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation.
3.5 Tools of Data Collection

3.5.1 Observations

The analysis in this thesis draws on the observational data gathered during the 8 months that were spent undertaking fieldwork in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) from November 2013 to June 2014. The observation sought to identify the discursive and structural mechanisms framing the perception and opinions of staff-members of RDO and the community members. Following Junker’s (2004 [1960]: 221-225) four-dimensional typology of observation, the ‘observer as participant’ role was adopted throughout the fieldwork. That is, my identity as a researcher was ‘… made publicly known at the outset … [and] … more or less publicly sponsored by people in situation studied and intentionally not [emphasis original] ‘kept under wraps’” (Junker, 2004 [1960]: 24). Such a role gives relatively easy access to first-hand information though the participants might not disclose their ‘real’ reactions and feelings (Junker, 2004 [1960]). Prior to the beginning of the fieldwork, I did consider ‘complete participant’ to conceal my identity as a researcher (Junker, 2004 [1960]). However, firstly, I had taught at the University of Peshawar and it was likely to encounter sociology graduates working in RDO, in which case keeping the identity secret would have been almost impossible. Secondly, negotiating entry, for example, through internship would have been time-consuming, which in doctoral research with scheduled deadlines was not feasible. Thirdly, it would have been challenging as the ‘… field worker cannot switch role(s) to go outside in-group and observe and participate in the dynamics of the relationship between in-group and the larger system with which it (the organisation) interacts. It also germinates ethical and professional dilemmas of what to communicate and what not and how to avoid being taken as a ‘spy’” (Junker, 2004 [1960]: 221-2). Fourthly, according to Hammersley and Atkinson
(2007: 82), it is usually impossible to take on a ‘novice role’ in one’s own society. Even if it were possible to avoid this difficulty, the ‘complete participant’ role is ethically problematic: It can pose for researcher the dilemma of having to decide which side or individual to support when, for example, the research subjects argue about organisational policies and regulations. Finally, I was relatively at liberty to observe, discuss and participate in activities at the project offices and field sites of TAP and LDP.\textsuperscript{11} The field-staff were supportive in taking me to the field-sites and introducing me to the community members. I spent quite a large number of days at the project offices, observing staff-members’ interaction with each other and their interaction with community members whenever they visited the offices. During ‘idle’ time, I took the opportunity to engage staff-members in informal discussion.

3.5.2 Interviews: Rationale and Process

Interviews were conducted to obtain ‘… knowledge of the social world beyond [observing] the interaction’ (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 126) between the staff members and community members as well as amongst the community members and the members of staff. Secondly, as the research questions in this research, though apparently disparate, are complementary, interviews were conducted to triangulate data from observations and documents for increasing ‘confidence in results … [and] … strengthen the completeness…’ (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 25) of the data. The approach to the treatment of the interview data was ‘catholic’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 97), in that interviewees’ accounts were taken at

\textsuperscript{11} On the whole, I spent more time with staff-members, primarily at the offices, than with community members. This occurred due to a number of factors. Rural areas in Pakistan do not have clearly marked road signs. There are no updated maps either. Even if I could make it to the communities on my own, it was least likely that community members would have welcomed me for research purposes. Thus I kept visiting project offices and went to communities whenever field-staff had scheduled visits. This turned out more effective as I had the chance of observing staff-community interaction. Moreover, it also gave me the opportunity to learn about the travel routes and network with community members for later scheduling of appointments for the interviews.
their ‘face value’ for the description and explanation of things as well as in terms of the perspectives they implied. Interviews, whether conducted with a highly educated individual or an illiterate farmer in the community, are always active meaning-making events. Therefore, caution was taken to consider:

... what is said in relation to how, where, when and by whom experiential information is conveyed, and to what end (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 158).

With this methodological consideration at the forefront, 34 interviews with the members of staff (Table 3.1, p. 87) and 29 with the community members (Table 3.2, p. 88) were conducted keeping in view their profile aspects, such as gender and hierarchical position in both the organisation and community. The rationale for interviewing people from diverse backgrounds was based on Becker’s (1998) following advice:

[D]oubt everything anyone in power tells you [emphasis original]. Institutions always put their best foot forward in public. ... What they say may be true, but social organisation gives them reason to lie. ... If you study a school, you will, of course, gather information from the principal and the teachers and the students; but try talking to the janitors and the clerks and secretaries too (and don’t forget the people who used to work there) (Becker, 1998: 91).

The interviews with the staff-members were conducted to understand and analyse their views, opinions and perception about the:

- Aims and objectives of the organisation and the specific project in which they were working as well as the roles and responsibilities they were delivering at the time of the fieldwork.
- Issues and challenges they saw to have been critical in positively and/or negatively influencing their performance, the operation of the project and the organisation as a whole.
• Issues of power and hierarchy both horizontally vis-à-vis other colleagues in the same cadre and vertically in relation to community members as well as the staff-members below or above them.

In the light of these considerations, a uniform interview guide was designed but practically the questions were moulded according to job-role of the research subjects (Appendix 7.1).

It should be highlighted that those members of staff were particularly focused for interviewing who had worked or had been working in the organisation for many years. This particularly drew from the theoretical possibilities to understand the process of endurance and/or change in the NGOs in Pakistan. The notion of process can be defined in Rescher’s (2000: 22) terms as ‘… an actual or possible occurrence that consists of an integrated series of connected developments unfolding in programmatic coordination: an orchestrated series of occurrences that are systematically linked to one another either causally or functionally’. Thus, keeping in view the historical approach of the project, I wished to locate organisational employees and community members’ ‘lived experiences’ (Janesick, 2014: 10) in the social worlds they inhabited as well as the history which had influenced their behaviour and perceptions (Mills, 1959) of development interventions and changes in the organisation. Since the present arises from the past and has implications for the future of individuals and organisational life (Dunkerley, 2013 [1988]: 84), I aimed at analysing ‘… relational account of social objects and their meaning, and through recognition that the actual arrangements of social life encode histories and sociologies in an empirical relation’ (Abbott, 2001: 237). However, firstly, instead of trying to determine statistical causes of transformations (Franzosi, 2006), I was interested in the question of ‘what
happened' (Skocpol, 1984a: 375) by recording interviewees’ narratives. In the words of Gotham and Staples (1996: 492), narratives are

… forms of representation that can provide knowledge about the past in terms of sequences of events, that include causes and effects, individual action and collective mobilisation, background conditions, practical deliberations, complications and consequences, and resulting actions.

Secondly, rather than taking interviewees as subjects of their past, the emphasis on historical narrative was based on the understanding regarding the interplay of individuals’ actions and structural contexts which might have brought intended and unintended outcomes (Skocpol, 1984b) to understand ‘… how and under what conditions something was created, the choices considered and not taken, as well as the paths chosen’ (Barrett and Srivastva, 1991: 236) for the interviewees and subsequently for the organisation as a whole. Thus conducted, the interviewees’ narratives were interlaced with the secondary literature on the political economy of aid flow to NGOs in Pakistan to make sense of the historical trajectories of organisational evolution.

A similar approach was adopted in interviewing community members who were either common members or leaders of the organisations formed by RDO (Appendix 7.2). Similarly, care was taken to interview community members from diverse backgrounds, the details of which are given in Table 3.2 (p.88). It can be noted in the Table that there is discrepancy between the number of male and female interviewees. The reason for this discrepancy is three-fold. Firstly, I was personally engaged in observations and conducting interviews with male community members. I used individual interviews primarily to juxtapose my preliminary analysis and corroborate that, whenever possible, by engaging in discussion with the interviewees. Secondly, rural people, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are
generally known for their hospitality. Thus, on a number of occasions while conducting individual interviews, I would soon find myself surrounded by a number of passing-by villagers who would sit down with us and, in most cases, participate in the discussion. I was also engaged in transcribing interviews and reflections on my field experience to use them as ‘fund of impressions’ (Becker, 1998: 91) in order to generate a constant dialogue of ideas and issues taking cues from which I followed a more structured pattern in observation as well as in the interviews. Thirdly, most of the male interviewees, both from the members of staff and community, were welcoming whenever I asked for more time in the near/far future at the end of the first interview. In the case of women, however, as stated above, in the rural society of Pakistan, particularly in the province of Khyber Pakthunkhwa, there are deeply entrenched norms regarding gender-segregation. Therefore, research assistants were recruited to conduct interviews with women community members (see section 3.6 below).
Table 3.1: Socio-demographic Profile of Interviewees (Staff-Members)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 &amp; above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Management</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field-level</td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
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<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-employee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2: Socio-demographic Profile of Interviewees (Community Members)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age-Group (years)</strong></td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 &amp; above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRP</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of membership</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were conducted with staff-members and members from the community as they are considered an ‘excellent tool for exploring group behaviours, interactions and norms … [to use them] … as part of a multi-method approach’ (Lloyd-Evans, 2006: 152). Two objectives guided the conduction of FGDs. Firstly, the aim was to elicit community members’ and staff-members’ responses in real time and place in face-to-face interaction for strategic generation of prompts on important themes (Merton, 1987). Secondly, a dialogical and interpretive stance was adopted to make it ‘closer approximation to natural interaction’ (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2014: 15). The second consideration was especially felt important while collecting data from the community members. While conducting interviews with a community member, others from the neighbourhood would flock, supposedly, partly out of curiosity and partly out of their ‘friendliness’. In such situations, I would switch from conducting an individual interview to an FGD. This was done because most of the interviews with community members took place in open yards near the farms in the villages or in the Hujras. Hujras in Pashtun society are places where males get together to discuss issues of interest and to receive guests. In most interview situations at Hujras, it was noted that the body posture of the interviewees changed when other community members sat around. So, it was thought wiser to invite spectators and listeners to reflect and comment on questions being posed and views expressed by the interviewees. Thus, most of the individual interviews with the community took a ‘naturalistic’ turn towards focus group discussions, the details of which are given in Table 3.3 (p. 90).

It has been often noted that FGD participants might not participate openly either due to peer pressure or the presence of ‘powerful voices’ (Lloyd-Evans, 2006: 155) in a group. To cope with this limitation, counterfactual issues were introduced for
discussion when, for example, an apparently ‘powerful’ member dominated the discussion. Thus conducted, FGDs worked as a platform for discussion to both corroborate the findings arrived at through other methods and for disconfirming issues and themes the insight for which came, for example, from the interviews or observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3: Focus Group Discussions with Community and Staff-members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.4 Documentary Analysis

The intention to collect documentary evidence in large part derived from historical institutionalists’ emphasis on the analysis of historical events and process as the very essence of understanding social phenomena. Skocpol (1984b) and Abbott (2001) in sociology and Tilly (2006: 417-37), Pierson (2004) and Hall (1989b) in political science, though divergent in their methodological approaches, are some of the contemporary exemplary scholars who have highlighted the analysis of historical evidence in social analysis. In this thesis, the motivation to collect documentary data regarding organisational history was particularly based on Kieser’s (1994) approach. According to him, among others, historical analyses could help us
In this case study, archival documents could help explore contingencies, for example, in key decisions and options taken by the leadership and the factors that triggered changes in organisational vision and procedures. Such an approach called for the collection of documentary resources, which might contain details of the various decisions taken by the organisation and the community members over the course of its history.

Documents can be used as resource and as topics (Scott, 1990). Keeping this in view, two types of documentary resources were particularly sought: (1) records of the staff-members’ meetings and (2) community members’ records of decisions with regard to RDO’s interventions. However, as noted above, RDO, like most other NGOs, was cautious in sharing information with outsiders (Mosse, 2001; O’Reilley and Dhanju, 2010). Although the management did not explicitly deny access to the archival records, it did dodge the request. Most importantly, however, after a few visits to the Headquarter when the Management Information and Archival Systems (MIAS) Officer became confident in communicating with me, he openly declared:

You can have a peek into the store room but trust me there won’t be much for you. We don't have a systematic [year by year] process for this [archiving process]. Perhaps what you find might be only of recent past, I mean post-2000s.

With regard to the collection of documents from the community-members, it soon became evident that very few among them were literate enough to note down their meetings in booklets provided by the RDO for the purpose of recording their procedures. In most cases, RDO’s field-staff drafted meeting reports for them,
which, as I observed, were mostly just the recording of basic information such as the number of participants in the meeting, the purpose of the meeting and the decision arrived at. Nonetheless, as an alternative, the following sets of documents were collected to analyse the history of various services as well as major issues that might have had continuing influence on the organisation:

- Annual reviews.
- Internal and external evaluation of projects and schemes conducted in the recent and remote past.
- Internal and external evaluation reports of the projects I had researched.

Additionally, to explore processes affecting the organisation, Czarniawska’s (1998) advice was followed to record the historical narratives of the experienced staff-members regarding ‘watershed’ moments in the organisation’s history, the actions taken by the organisation and the consequences of those actions.

Organisational documents were also treated as ‘topics’, which, it was hoped, would help in identifying newer areas and issues for exploration during the fieldwork. The most significant example of this is the interviews conducted at one of the village banks in the LDP project of RDO. While collecting documents once a report regarding microfinance village banks came across. When it was discussed with the staff members, it was learned that RDO had relatively recently introduced women-run village banks primarily for women’s poverty alleviation and empowerment. Thus the ‘topic’ of women-run village bank in the document and interviewees’ endorsement regarding the novelty of the intervention became the basis for extension of the fieldwork into a village bank.

12 Most field-staff and community members treated this as mere ‘routine’.
3.6 Recruitment and Training of Research Assistants

Pakistani society, particularly its rural areas, is characterised by gender segregation (Weiss, 1998; 1999). Therefore, female research assistants were recruited to collect data from women-members of a village bank that the staff-members of LDP considered as 'one of the most successful'. A colleague in the sociology department at the University of Peshawar helped in recruiting three students from the M.A sociology cohort.

The research assistants were trained with regard to:

- The purpose of the research.
- The purpose and type of interviews they were supposed to undertake.
- Ethical issues of ‘informed consent’, ‘confidentiality’ and ‘anonymity’.
- Tips and suggestions for engaging women in discussion and sensitivities in respondent-driven sampling.

A relatively detailed interview guide was designed in the Urdu language especially for conducting interviews at the village bank (Appendix 7.3). The rationale for designing a lengthy interview guide drew out of the understanding that the research assistants did not have thorough knowledge of the theoretical framework, key questions and topics of the research.

The research assistants were also advised to take extensive field notes regarding, for example, the conditions of the households, including the presence of other people, if any, as well as the behavioural cues of the interviewees. They were also advised to write a daily reflective account of their fieldwork experience, which were collected from them every morning before departure to the field. Moreover, before taking them to the field a brief verbal account of their fieldwork experience was
taken from them every day along with a brief question-answer session in order to sensitise them for further probing. These sessions were conducted to assess the level of their engagement in discussion with the interviewees. Finally, they were requested to transcribe the recorded interviews right after the fieldwork concluded. Since they had conducted the interviews, I asked them transcribe those to capture, in as far as possible, the context in which the interviews were conducted.

The research assistants conducted 19 individual interviews (Table 3.2) and 7 FGDs (Table 3.3). While admittedly the data was not as in-depth as those collected personally by the researcher, nevertheless, it provided considerably detailed description of women’s experiences of and perception about the services provided through the village bank. It should be noted, however, that the relatively less depth in the interview data is primarily due to the interviewees’ inability to articulately communicate their concerns and wishes. As can be seen from the data in Table 3.2, only 4 out of 19 interviewees had basic literacy. This along with their relative lack of mobility beyond the immediate neighbourhood and virtually no experience of interacting with researchers seemed to have the compounding effect of inability to talk at length.

### 3.7 Analysis and Coding of the Data

The analysis of the empirical data was a dialogical, on-going process. Data was compiled into NVivo. The interview transcripts and observational notes were coded separately for the two projects (TAP and LDP) and the village bank that were studied at RDO. Over time, further categories of analyses were added from the documentary evidence (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013: 70-8). For instance, the coding schemes of, among others, ‘organisational issues’, and ‘institutional issues’ were added to the data-base, the cues for which came from the review of organisational
documents as well as from the institutionalist literature. Similarly, some of the staff-members, particularly the experienced ones, also suggested certain issues that had relatively recently gained prominence in influencing the organisation. Likewise, secondary literature also turned instrumental in revisiting some of the initially designed codes and sub-codes to make the analysis more thorough. The analysis was also guided by concerns for corroborating findings, for instance, from interviews with observational and/or documentary data. Similarly, the analysis was also kept open to counter-factual data and views. Finally, and most importantly, care was taken to compare and contrast the views and opinions of:

- ex-employees versus current employees.
- currently employed managers versus field-staff.
- community members versus staff-members.
- common members of community organisations (COs) versus the leadership of COs.

These comparisons, along with the identification of influential events in organisational history from the documents, ultimately became a rich source for interpreting both the current efforts of RDO for community-driven change and communitarian, organisational and wider factors, which have been influencing its goal of grass-roots democratisation and empowerment since its inception in the 1990s.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Considerations

This research was conducted according to standards of professional integrity as enshrined by the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002). Due measures were taken in approaching the case study organisation, scheduling and recording interviews, collection of observational data and organisational documents (see
Appendix 5 and 6). The utmost care was taken in ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality to all the research participants: the interview data was recorded with the permission of the interviewees; where they expressed reluctance, interviews were conducted jotting down their views verbatim in the notebook. It is appropriate to mention that most interviewees discussed and spoke, apparently, quite frankly. Therefore, to safeguard interviewees and the organisation, the following measures have been taken in with regard to data presentation in the thesis.

To anonymise the case study organisation a number of steps have been taken. Firstly, the fictional name of Rural Development Organisation (RDO) has been adopted to identify the organisation. Secondly, instead of giving the actual year of its establishment, the decade of 1990s has been mentioned as a period during which RDO was established. The names and bibliographic information of the two projects analysed in the thesis, viz., The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) and the Livelihood Development Programme (LDP), are also fictional. Additionally, bibliographic entries for other documents of the organisation (e.g. project proposals, annual reviews, and monitoring and evaluation reports, and organisational/project evaluation reports), if referred to in the thesis, have been also anonymised to safeguard the identity of the case study organisation (see Appendix 2). The list of all such organisational documents consulted for analysis is given in appendix 2. Finally, it is also pertinent to point out that although RDO operated in a large number of districts throughout Pakistan, the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in the three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which have been anonymised as Gall, Hall and Fall. The interviewees’ details such as name, age, gender, designation and years of experience in the organisation and years of association with RDO have been also anonymised. In the same spirit, the name(s) of a place(s), person(s), or project(s) mentioned in the interviewees’ accounts are also fictional.
There are a few exceptions to the foregoing anonymisation strategy, though. Firstly, I have retained the original names of the persons, places, and projects in Pakistan which have been cited from the secondary literature. Secondly, if the interviewees mentioned either a place where RDO had not worked, a person not associated with it or projects not implemented by the organisation, then its original name has been retained. The original name of a person, project and place mentioned in the thesis have been marked with asterisks (*). The asterisk (*) has been used only once at the moment of first mentioning of a place, project, or person. Thirdly, although I have anonymised the projects that I have analysed, information regarding their aims and objectives, implementation strategy, types of interventions, donors and financial outlay are given in original. The donors who funded these projects also support quite a large number of similar types of projects in partnerships with other Pakistani NGOs. Therefore, it was felt that disclosing their real identity would in no sense jeopardise the case study organisation.

As mentioned above, almost throughout the fieldwork the dual identities of ‘professor’ from the University of Peshawar and ‘researcher’ from the University of Warwick were adopted. However, in most cases, particularly, while visiting the communities, only the ‘professorial’ identity was used. This was done out of the understanding that the staff-members and community members might not be that much welcoming if I introduced myself as a PhD student from an ‘unheard of’ University. For instance, after about a month into the fieldwork, I was holding an interview that had gradually turned into an FGD, the brother of one of the participants joined in but sat silently. When the discussion concluded, he asked:

How can we [referring to himself and others in the gathering] trust that you are not hired by RDO or USAID [which had funded the project in the village]?
When I handed him a copy of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) that I had signed with the RDO, a copy of which I always carried, he further probed:

But who would know if you are from the University of Peshawar and a student at a University in England and [that you are] not working for someone else\(^{13}\)?

He seemed to have pacified only when I showed him my ‘student status letter’ and business card. Beyond this one-off event, no research subject ever probed that much about the purpose and intent of my research. The ‘professorial’ identity, on the whole, turned out advantageous for data collection. The ‘how to’ guides on development fieldwork, such as Scheyvens and Storey’s (2003) and Desai and Potter’s (2006), which are mostly written from the perspective of researchers from developed countries, among other things, caution about health and safety, places and schedule to stay in and visit during the fieldwork (Leslie and Storey, 2003: 77-96). Being ‘native’ to the area and the people, no such issue was experienced. However, the proximity of the relationship, which was groomed through the identity as ‘professor’ was (and has been), nonetheless, ethically challenging. This is discussed in the following section.

### 3.8.1 Dilemmas in Researching my ‘own’ Society

Aside from some ‘glitch’ in gaining official access to the organisation, generally the passage through the ‘gatekeepers’ was altogether quite relaxed and, at times, quite

\(^{13}\) Researching NGOs and/or communities has been challenging and riskier for foreign researchers, especially from the Western/Developed countries (see, for example, Key, 1990: 62–102; Patterson, 2005: 9–24). The situation seems to have become problematic for ‘indigenous’ researchers, especially those who do not have organisational backup. This might have occurred as a consequence of events after 9/11, particularly after the alleged involvement of an NGO, Save the Children, in the killing of Osama Bin Laden (Shah and Cassidy, 2012).
an enjoyable learning experience. Consider, for instance, an encounter from the very first day of the visit to a village on 22 November 2013. The visit was conducted in the company of the RDO’s staff-members for the purpose of observing first hand training sessions for the farmers. The farmers were attending training regarding modern agricultural practices in a *Hujra*. While taking photographs of the participants and jotting down notes in the diary, almost instantly, a member of staff from the co-implementing partner-NGO of the RDO, who had just arrived, came and while attempting to look into my diary, he rather angrily asked:

What are you writing? Whom are you working for?

A member of staff from the RDO introduced me as ‘professor’ from the University of Peshawar, which calmed him down. The ‘professorial’ role worked as a ‘trump card’ in data collection, but, as methodological literature has often pointed out, there is always the likelihood of a ‘flipside’ to any role in research situations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Culturally, teachers are accorded (considerable to significant) respect, especially in the rural areas, the ‘flip side’ of which was that I would sometimes find community members reluctant to talk ‘frankly’. Similarly, because I was a ‘teacher’, I had to dress ‘properly’, otherwise, people would not believe me. Yet, most rural people wore quite simple clothes and, to give them a sense of equality and fraternity, RDO’s field-staff also dressed simply (and sometimes roughly), which seemed to sometimes further exacerbate the situation. As such, whenever I found interview participants to be reluctant, I would pass on cues (without explicitly ‘lying’) that their views could help improve aspects of RDO’s services. Similarly, some of the community members, especially those who had some complaints about development interventions, expected some beneficial outcomes of my research. For
instance, on 27th March 2014, I spent about 4 hours with a few community members in and around their Hujra and the farm. When I turned my audio recorder off, their leader, who, though not that literate, was quite agile and sharp in discussion, asked:

Professor sayb[^14], [now] tell me what would you do with this [my recording of their views]?

Repying, I said that I would write a report on this and, if successful, the university would give me a PhD degree. Then he took me by surprise:

That is fine but what would we get out of this?

After looking silently into the space for a few seconds, I thought I should be ‘fair’ with the interviewees. So, I replied.

Hmmmm… to be honest, nothing. Do not be disappointed but I do not think that it will help to bring any change. I will get my PhD degree, get promotion and the thesis will gather dust in a shelf somewhere...

There were a few other similar incidents, but this one somehow was a more ‘pinching experience’, perhaps, out of the reason that those community members gave me an appointment for the interview just over a brief phone call and continued sitting with me until I had nothing more to ask. The culturally prescribed and practiced ‘respect for teachers’, particularly in the rural areas, also entails the idea that they are supposed to be on the ‘moral high ground’ and expected to ‘guide society’. The ethical dilemma takes another dimension, if we take note of the manner in which RDO’s management was wary of ‘academic’ researchers. In fact, on a number of occasions, those members of staff with whom I developed close contacts during the fieldwork would once in a while lightly remark:

[^14]: See footnote no. 6.
Look! do not drown us\textsuperscript{15}, please…

The reference to the plural ‘us’ meant other people of their cadre in the organisation. The expression meant that they were concerned about their jobs and reputation in the organisation. During the fieldwork, I had to make decisions instantly to save mine and the participants’ time and, as such, everything almost always seemed ‘OK’ as long as my purpose was served. Over the last one and a half year, listening to the original audio recordings and reading interview transcripts and field-notes have somehow created a barrier. The barrier is perhaps describable as an ‘ethical dilemma’, which I have found difficult to resolve.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has described and explained how, keeping the research question and theoretical framework in mind, the fieldwork was conducted to explore the organisational, community-level and wider institutional factor that influenced and shaped RDO’s efforts for instituting processes of empowerment and bottom-up change in the lives of the rural poor in the Pakistan. It has demonstrated the relevance of triangulated use of interviews, observations, FGDs and documentary evidence in analysing the notion of change in and through NGOs from the perspective of institutional arguments. The chapter has demonstrated the appropriateness of the methods selected for documenting and analysing process-oriented historical data, which forms the core of historical institutionalist analysis. Moreover, in explaining the research strategy and tools of data collection, the chapter has demonstrated the relevance and ‘added’ value of the approach, which

\textsuperscript{15} The actual Pashtu phrase was ‘moong kharaab na ke’, which literally translates as ‘don’t damage us’.
the erstwhile researches on NGOs in Pakistan have not applied, for one reason or another.

The following chapter reviews the literature on the politico-economic conditions and the socio-cultural environment in which NGOs emerged in Pakistan and for instituting change in which they have been working since their ascendance in 1980s. Thus, the chapter provides a broader context of NGOs and works as a framework for positioning and comparing the findings and the conclusions derived from the analysis of empirical data, which are presented in chapters 5 through 8.
Chapter 4 – NGOs in Pakistan: An Historical and Institutionalist Account

4.0 Introduction

This research investigates the influence of community social structure, the political and economic environment and donors on shaping RDO. It also examines the implication of the changes for NGOs in bringing about social change in Pakistan and more widely in the global South. Within the framework of this overarching aim, the current chapter addresses the following sub-question of the thesis.

Under what politico-economic contexts and with what approach to social change was RDO established?

The question is framed as examining a case study organisation (RDO), but, in order to achieve this, the chapter necessarily presents the broader politico-economic and institutional factors that led to the emergence of a variety of NGOs in Pakistan, including RDO. We can neither fully understand the particular circumstantial factors that led to RDO’s emergence, nor can we expect to assess the factors that might be influencing it unless we have provided the broader historical canvass for the emergence of NGOs in Pakistan. RDO, like a large number of other NGOs in Pakistan, emerged towards the close of 1980s with the aim of organising poor men and women around issues of common concern to help them solve their problems themselves. The unprecedented growth of NGOs in the 1980s and the 1990s cannot be understood without outlining both the conditions and circumstances which led to their emergence and to changes within which NGOs have been working. With these issues in mind, the chapter is divided into four sections.
The first section examines the size and structure of Pakistan’s NGO sector. Alongside this, it also presents figures regarding the Pakistani government's low spending on education, health and employment. The figures are presented with a view to generate the general characteristics of the political regime in which these developments have been taking place. The section also acts as a background for an historical survey of the colonial policies that are supposed to have contributed to the practice of low social spending. This is dealt with in section 2 of the chapter. The section particularly refers to the colonial policies regarding agricultural developments and their contribution to the structuring of the landed-elites in politics. This has been done keeping in view historical institutional arguments regarding path dependence to determine whether the colonial policies contributed to the reinforcement of existing elites in political structure or also added to their influence on subsequent political developments in the post-colonial period. Following this, the third section reviews post-colonial political development especially about the development of the local government. Since local government is the primary arena to assess whether people can claim their statutory rights and access government services, the section seeks to determine the extent to which and mechanisms by which political agents and state agencies conferred rights on Pakistani citizens at the lowest tier of the government. Thus, analysing whether historical developments in Pakistan have been path dependent or not, the chapter in the final section reviews the politico-economic developments and institutional factors that paved the way for the emergence of NGOs. The section particularly draws on politico-economic developments since the 1980s, which have contributed to the growth of NGOs and the variety of interventions associated with them.
4.1 Theoretical Context for Understanding NGOs in Pakistan

The context of NGOs’ emergence and functioning in Pakistan can be understood in terms of Salamon and Anheier’s (1996; 1998; see also Salamon et al., 2000) ‘social origin’ theory. The theory is based on the works of Moore (1966) and Esping-Andersen (1990). Moore (1966) undertook a neo-Marxist comparative historical analysis of India, China, Japan, France, England, the U.S., Germany and Russia (Skocpol, 1973; Wiener, 1976). He proposed three developmental trajectories to social change, viz., capitalist democratic, capitalist-reactionary and communistic. According to Moore (1966), (1) the ‘capitalist democratic’ route engendered democracy, (2) the capitalist reactionary route culminated in fascist dictatorship and (3) the communistic route resulted in communist dictatorship. The key to any of these routes lay in the evolution of social relationships between the peasantry, aristocracy and the monarchs. His central thesis was that epochal historical changes were brought about by ‘social forces’, which were in flux because of antagonistic interests between these three classes.

Borrowing Moore’s (1966) concept of ‘social forces’ and Esping-Andersen’s (1990) concept of ‘regime’ (see Chapter 2, p.54-56), Salamon and Anheier (1998: 228) have proposed four types of ‘non-profit regimes ‘… each characterised not only by a particular state role but also by a particular position for the third sector; and, most importantly, each also reflecting a particular constellation of social forces’. The notion of regime can be understood as a ‘… set of implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge …’ (Krasner, 1982: 186). According to the theory, two interrelated dimensions are critical to the evolution of a regime into one of the four types, viz., the extent of government social welfare spending and the scale of the NGO sector. The four regime types are depicted in the table below according to which if a
government’s spending on social welfare is low, but there is a large NGO sector, then the regime would be ‘liberal’. Conversely, if a government’s investment in social welfare is high and has a small NGO sector, then it would be ‘social democrat’. If both the government’s spending on social welfare as well as the NGO sector is large, then the regime would be ‘corporatist’. Finally, in a situation when a government is spending quite little on social welfare and has a small NGO sector, then it would be a ‘statist’ regime. In a statist regime, ‘… the state retains the upper hand in a wide range of social policies, but not as the instrument of an organised working class. … it exercises power on its own behalf, or on behalf of business and economic elites, but with a fair degree of autonomy sustained by long traditions of deference and a much more pliant religious order’ (Salamon and Anheier, 1998: 19).

Table 4.1: Four Types of Non-profit Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Social Welfare Spending</th>
<th>Non-profit Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Statist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Social Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporatist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Salamon and Anheier (1998: 228)

The NGO-sector in Pakistan can be characterised to have evolved under a ‘statist’ regime (Iqbal et al., 2004). Firstly, as it will become clear in Section 4.3 below, none of the governments in Pakistan’s history ever invested considerably in human development (ADB, 2015: 3; Iqbal et al. 2004: 42). For instance, in 2013-14, the total expenditure on education was 2.1% of GDP and expenditure on health was merely 0.42% of GDP during 2014-15 (GoP, 2015: 9-10). Secondly, according to popular estimates, there are ‘… more than 150,000 NGOs in Pakistan out of which
45,000 are active and operational’ (Brandsynario, 2014: n.p.). Furthermore, the sector employs 264,000 people and 212,000 as volunteers (Brandsynario, 2014: n.p.). These figures are drawn from the work of Ghaus-Pasha et al. (2002), which was the first ever extensive research estimating the size and scope of the NGO sector in Pakistan. Similarly, relatively recently, the newspaper reports (Joshi, 2009; Ghumman, 2010) and independent researchers (e.g., Naviwala, 2010: 5) have estimated that there are 100,000 NGOs in Pakistan. These appear as valid estimates in that many new NGOs might have emerged as a result of the three major humanitarian crises. Firstly, an earthquake in 2005 killed 73,000 people and made an estimated 2.8 to 3.3 million homeless (World Bank, 2007: n.p.). Secondly, in 2008, Pakistani Army’s operation against the terrorists in Malakand region (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province) displaced an estimated 3 million people (ICG, 2009: n.p.) which, when added to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)\textsuperscript{17}, totals up to an estimated 4.2 million IDPs (ICG, 2010 cited in Pechayre, 2010: 2). Finally, the 2010 monsoon floods affected 2.5 million (GoP/WHO, 2010). Assuming that since 2002 NGOs and their employees might have doubled, we get the total figure of 952,000, which would merely amount to 1.68 % of 56.52 million employed population during 2013-14 (GoP, 2015: 10). Hence, the claim that the NGO sector in Pakistan is exhibiting features of ‘statist regime’ holds ground.

The characteristics of the ‘statist regime’ are also distinctively discernible from the political and socio-economic history of Pakistan. Pakistan encountered many

\textsuperscript{16} According to the older studies, there were 25,000 to 35,000 (ADB, 1999: 4) to 60,000 NGOs in Pakistan (Sattar and Baig, 2001: 6).
\textsuperscript{17} FATA, sometimes also referred to as ‘Tribal Agencies’ or simply ‘Agencies’, has special status in the Constitution of Pakistan (Articles 51, 59 and 247) in that though they are part of Pakistani state but they are under the direct executive authority of the President of Pakistan and administered through a set of laws called Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) formulated in 1901 (Government of Pakistan [GoP], 2015).
development opportunities, but successive governments never willingly capitalised on them to institutionalise pro-poor policies. According to the World Bank (2002b),

[ Pakistan is] the world's third largest recipient of official development assistance, lagging only India and Egypt. ... received $58 billion in aid [in 1995 $ terms], including 22 IMF and World Bank adjustment loans, and considerable bilateral assistance from the United States and other countries. ... if the $58 billion in development assistance provided to Pakistan between 1960 and 1999 had been invested during this time to yield a moderate real return of 6%, it would have grown into assets equal to $239 billion in 1998 .... Instead, this debt now stands at 92 per cent of GDP, and is in and of itself a constraint on growth (World Bank, 2002b: 2-14).

These shortcomings owe their emergence and persistence to historically entrenched formal and informal rules, decision-making procedures and norms, which have worked detrimentally for pro-poor policies. Moreover, the normative structure across all the tiers of the government has historically worked to the advantage of the political, bureaucratic and/or military elites. Thus, it is within this framework that NGOs have gradually evolved to provide services at the grassroots and to work for bottom up change. To substantiate this claim, we need an analytically descriptive history of the factors that have gradually coalesced to develop into a statist regime. Once we have surveyed the history of politico-economic institutions in Pakistan, we shall be able to understand the reasons for NGOs’ emergence and assess the factors that might be positively and negatively influencing their agenda for bottom-up change. Thus, the following two sections present the evolution of the micro and macro institutional structure of the regime within which NGOs have evolved.

4.2 The Colonial Legacy

The political history of Pakistan exhibits a path-dependent pattern of alternation between ‘democratically’ elected, predominantly, landed elites and military dictators. Moreover, by and large, no government, neither civilian nor military has ever
enacted political and economic policies out of the concern to provide education, health, income and employment opportunities to the masses. The consistent inadequacies in these services is attributable to three impediments, namely (1) the power of the landed elites (Rumi, 2011), (2) the declining legitimacy and capacity of the government bureaucracy (Husain, 1999) and (3) the military and its growing corporate interests (Siddiqa, 2007; see also, Nadvi and Robinson, 2004). This section argues that the genesis of the path-dependent character of the politics of exclusion at the grassroots lay in the colonial policies, which have had an enduring effect not only on initial constitutional developments (Sayeed, 1968), but also on the structure and functioning of state departments after independence (Ali, 2004). To substantiate this claim, the following paragraphs trace the influence of the colonial policies, particularly those pertaining to agriculture. This would help us understand the process of their occurrence as well as their implications for the functioning of macro and micro political environment after Pakistan’s independence in 1947.

Imperial Britain enacted a number of laws to ‘modernise’ the ‘traditional’ society of India. A vivid example can be Macaulay’s (1835: n.p.) ‘minute on education’, in which he offered a justification for the introduction of English education thus:

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England.

The ‘minute on education’ became the basis for the ‘English Education Act’ of 1835. The ‘modernisation’ of ‘traditional’ structures became political and economically more palpable in the wake of the ‘mutiny’ of 1857 when the British crown took over political control of India from the East India Company (Gardezi, 1983). Thus, for instance, under the law of permanent settlements of 1871 (Malik, 2009), agricultural land was given on permanent basis to the landlord families loyal to the British
administration (Gardezi, 1983). In the case of the Sindh province, according to Lieten and Breman (2002), Waderas (village chieftains) were given exclusive property rights. They introduced share-cropping mechanism with tenants. The measure of awarding exclusive rights over agricultural land to the landlords was taken to pre-empt potential political hostilities. As such, the tenants who had since long worked as owner-cultivators of lands were further disempowered as they entirely became dependent for their survival on the will of the landlords. Moreover, landlords’ consolidation of local power also provided them with the opportunity to participate in regional and higher-level politics without having to worry about support from below. Thus ‘[b]y setting themselves up as local politicians, they became major power players, intimidating and oppressing the peasantry at large and sharecroppers in particular’ (Lieten and Breman, 2002: 337). Similarly, the ‘Land Alienation Act of 1900 …a paternalistic legislation … to protect property and interests of incumbent agrarian landlords against incursions by commercial and trading groups…’ (Ali, 1987: 112; see also, Ali, 2002; 2004) consolidated the landed elites’ power in imperial politics as well as at the grassroots. The colonial masters did modernise agriculture by building a dense network of irrigation canals through which vast new areas were brought under cultivation, but those largely contributed to the economic and political clout of the landlords. For instance, in the Punjab (province), when new land became cultivable after the construction of water canals, the official decree dictated the allotment of cultivable land of 150 – 600 acres to the “hereditary agriculturalists” but kamins (menials), who were of low ‘caste’ were not allowed (Ali, 1987: 123). In a nutshell, by the time of the independence in 1947 ‘… the zamindars of the Punajab [sic], the waderas of Sindh, the khans of Sarhad and the sardars (tribal chiefs) of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier… ’ (Gardezi, 1983: 31) had established themselves well in the political-economy of their regions. Hence,
Pakistanis agree that as the country emerged from British rule, their political institutions were weak and dominated by a patrimonial, rule-territorial elite: the ‘feudals’... the creation of world’s largest contiguous expanse of irrigated lands was deliberately used to create territories of political dominance, an arrangement which engineered, if you will, a political system based on patronage that encouraged those already dominant to use legislative, fiscal and administrative instruments to exclude the poor. ... the colonial practice of curtailing local politics and privileging executive/bureaucratic systems of rule created a perfect system for rent-seeking and valorisation of position and privilege... (Craig and Porter, 2006: 191-3).

Since Pakistan’s independence, the structures (e.g., excessive power and privileges of the agrarian class, powerful bureaucracy) that were designed for the sustenance of the colonial set up have not only persisted, but have also become more patrimonial and rent-seeking. To demonstrate how the colonial structures became further crystallised and how the powerful elements in politics, bureaucracy and the army created a path-dependent self-reinforcing process of social exclusion and disempowerment at the grassroots, the following section provides an historical overview of various policies, particularly those pertaining to the local government. The narrow focus on local government is dictated by the aims of the thesis which, in essence, is about the analysis of factors influencing NGOs’ in bringing change at the grassroots. Nevertheless, where appropriate, reference to national and international political economy is also made, as these either impinged on the structures of local government or provided politico-ideological support for their enactment and sustenance.

4.3 Post-Colonial Developments

If one were to take a panoramic view of Pakistan’s history, it would appear to be divisible between two major eras: The era of state-centrism that lasted from 1947 until late 1980s, and the era of neoliberalism spanning roughly over the last three decades. On a closer examination, it would also be found that each era has been
characterised by cyclical turns between civilian and military governments. Yet a further closer scrutiny would reveal that its political history is the story of gradual entrenchment of ‘bureaucratic-military oligarchy’ (Cheema and Sayeed, 2006: 7), which, while originally insulated from politics during the colonial times (Nadvi and Robinson, 2004), became politicised due to the elitist ‘nature’ of the state structure. As such, it appears valid to argue that the cyclical shifts between civilian and military rule has put in place a governing structure that exhibits strong currents of path-dependent developments. Thus, in appearance, successive governments have introduced ‘reforms’ to ‘revamp’ local government but, in reality, the structures put in place have always served those in power, rather than the constituencies.

At the time of independence in August 1947, the Muslim League – the party that had led the Pakistan movement – mostly comprising of the landed elites (Ali, 1987) was of ‘… very poor raw material in terms of political leaders and administrators’ (Sayeed, 1968: 219). For instance, between 1947 and 1956, Pakistan did not have a constitution of its own as the political (landed-) elites were engaged in alliances and counter-alliances to grab power. This process alone would have far reaching implications for the functioning of state machinery as politicians resorted to help from the military and/or bureaucracy against each other, thus leading to the politicisation of both institutions (Nadvi and Robinson, 2004). Similarly, bureaucrats also became more salient in affecting change in state structure as the period was marked by the ‘technical’ 5-year programmes for socio-economic development (Rashid, 1983). The programmes were designed under the guidance of the ‘experts’ from Harvard University (US) because Pakistan sided with the US in the Cold War. These processes were taking place amidst rising political instability, which became a pretext for the first coup d'etat by General Ayub in 1958.
Ayub is credited with having introduced the country’s first local government system called Basic Democracies (BD). It was an elaborate 4-tiered hierarchical system of Union Councils, Tehsil Councils, District Council and Divisional Council. Elections to the lowest tier, the Union Council, were held on adult franchise. However, election to the higher tiers was conducted indirectly, i.e., the Union Councillors elected members to the higher tiers (Zaidi, 2005). Additionally, the government-nominated bureaucrats would be members of the higher tiers in the local government. In fact, District and Divisional Councils were placed under the administration of Assistant Commissioners and Commissioners, who were the most powerful figures in the bureaucracy at their respective levels. However, firstly, elections to local government were based on ‘non-party’ basis. Secondly, it is alleged that his land reforms were motivated more by the desire to curb the power of landed elites who wielded political power over the masses in their constituencies (Zaidi, 2005: 15). The influence of bureaucrats in a ‘non-party’ environment meant that local elites subscribed to paternalistic tactics to entrench power and seduce bureaucrats to allocate funds for their constituencies. That is, ‘[l]acking a legitimate base in local, representative politics, factional contests were played out around struggles to control the two principle means of governance: first, the thana and kutchery – the police and the magistracy – and second, distribution of local development largesse and favours of office’ (Craig and Porter, 2005: 194). In other words, bureaucracy, in collusion with the landed elites, contributed to the institutionalisation of patronage-based service-delivery.

It should be also highlighted that, like much of the Third World, the 1960s was the era of economic ‘modernisation’ in Pakistan. Since Pakistan had sided with the US in the Cold War, it accrued the additional advantage of receiving advice on designing state-centric programmes for industrialisation of the country (Rashid,
1983), which were based on Rostow’s (1960) model (see Chapter 2, p. 19-21). These did materialise into 6% annual growth in GNP (Candland, 2001: 264) but, being based on the ‘doctrine of inequality’ (Rashid, 1983: 174), towards the end of 1960s ‘…the Harvard model had created the 22 families who controlled over 70% of Pakistani financial assets in one way or the other’ (Rashid, 1983: 176). Since bureaucracy had acquired a central status in the planning and execution of national development plans, the modernisation project further contributed to its centrality in planning at national level (Cheema and Sayeed, 2006: 6). In essence, both the domestic politics and the international political economy of aid-based modernisation contributed to the perpetuation and further entrenchment of patronage-based set up at central and local government level. In historical institutionalists’ terms, the political and bureaucratic institutions exhibited features of path dependence as, for example, the Basic Democracies were ‘… characterised by processes of reproduction…’ (Mahoney, 2000: 256), reinforcing existing institutional patronage based politics.

The next watershed moment in Pakistan’s politico economic history began with Zulfiqar Bhutto’s leadership (1971-78), initially as the President of the country and then as the first elected civilian Prime Minister. Under the socialist agenda of providing roti, kapra aur makan (food, clothes and shelter), he rolled back Ayub’s policies and nationalised almost all the major industries, including banks and insurance companies. Ironically, being a part of a socialist government, one would have expected him to reform local government but, while he dismantled Ayub’s Basic Democracy system, no new set up was designed or elections were held for local councils; just two local government ordinances were promulgated in 1972 and 1975. These measures had two negative repercussions. Firstly, bureaucracy became further politicised: as services at the local level were provided largely through bureaucracy (Zaidi, 2005), which meant that instead of dismantling its
power, the negligence of local government further strengthened it; likewise, an expanded state meant increasing the engagement of bureaucracy in state-corporations (Cheema and Sayeed, 2006). Secondly, bureaucracy, especially at the lower cadres, became means for patronage-based employment (Nadvi and Robinson, 2004). That is, party workers and supporters were employed in state bureaucracy in return for their political work. Although his government introduced some modifications in ‘... labour laws, minimum wages and anti-monopoly legislation, all of which only marginally helped the underprivileged and poor masses of Pakistan’ (Rashid and Gardezi, 1983: 12), on the whole, nationalisation policies came at the expense of macro-economic stability (Gazdar and Sayeed, 2003) as eventually many of the state corporations ‘... had to be closed down or became part of a list of ‘sick industries’’ (Amin-Khan, 2012: 179).

The third and final major phase in Pakistan’s state-centric period of political development spans over eleven years of military rule (1977-88) by General Zia. As if history repeated itself, just like Ayub, he did revive local government through the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) in 1979, but elections to local councils were held on ‘non-party’ basis (Zaidi, 2005: 19). Again, since political parties were out of the scene, the local elites adopted clientelistic measures to gain power in local government (Cheema and Sayeed, 2006: 14). Similarly, instead of decentralising power to the citizens, the elected local governments had lesser power while the bureaucracy’s power increased along with a centralised state-administration at the federal level (Nadvi and Robinson, 2004: 16). Zia’s regime was also repressive particularly for women as its ‘Islamisation’ programme promulgated laws curtailing their rights. It will be explained below (Section 4.4) that this development played a crucial role in the emergence and pro-activeness of women’s rights-based advocacy NGOs. It is also important to highlight that, globally, the 1980s was the period of
Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) (see Chapter 2, p.19-21). In the case of Pakistan, however, these were halted until Zia’s death in 1988 (Candland, 2001), presumably because the regime was fighting the US-led ‘jihad’ against the ‘red infidels’ (communists) of USSR in Afghanistan. It can be argued that the repressive military regime of Zia, which was perpetuating and strengthening clientelism at the grassroots, was ‘diplomatically’ supported by the US and other anti-USSR allies as long as it served their purpose. In other words, the macro political structure with the support of other national governments contributed to the perpetuation of patron-client relationships between the people on the one hand and the politicians and the bureaucracy on the other hand.

Zia’s death in 1988 can be considered the beginning of the neoliberal era in Pakistan’s civilian life, but was to be politically the most unstable period. Firstly, the civilian governments changed ten times between 1988 and 1999 (Craig and Porter, 2006: 197). The two dominant political parties, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Muslim League (ML), that ruled alternately were actually ‘… unstable and temporary amalgams of groups based on shifting allegiances and personality organised around temporary patron-client ties’ (McCartney, 2011: 189). GDP growth fell from over 6 % a year in 1980s to an average of 4.5 % in the 1990s. Firstly, just like Bhutto’s era, local government became redundant ‘… primarily because they became competing centres of patronage and power [emphasis original] …’ (Zaidi, 2005: 28). This was because provincial governments appointed administrators to run the affairs at different tiers of the system established during Zia’s period. Secondly, Structural Adjustment Policies were rigorously implemented: 6 loan agreements were signed during Benazir Bhutto’s regimes of 1988-90 and 1993-96; 2 loan agreements were signed during Nawaz Sharif’s government in 1990-93 and 1997-99 (Ahmed and Khan, 2009: 4). The period was also marked by the imposition of the Washington
Consensus-based initiatives for ‘good governance’, the most striking example of which was the Social Action Programme (SAP) that ran in two phases between 1992 and 2003. The programme was initiated primarily under the dictates of the World Bank as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative between the government and the NGOs (World Bank, 2003). It was a mega project of US$ 8 billion, out of which US$450 million were loans primarily aimed at improving enrolment in education and health services delivery (Altaf, 2011: 4). However, the programme was a disaster on a massive scale. Reasons for failure included the use of ‘community participation’ as a fiat, patron-clientelism in the allocation of developmental schemes, and the hierarchical structure of the administrative set up which discouraged community participation (Altaf, 2011). Social Action Programme (SAP) was implemented out of the critique of the ‘failure’ of state-centric development, but the absence of a viable local government and the existence of well-entrenched clientelist structures in bureaucracy and local politics resulted in its failure. In historical institutional terms, it appears valid to state that the shift from state-centrism to market-driven reforms was a change in appearances only, as the institutional structures of state, at least from the point of view of common citizens, operated as clientelistically as before.

The all-pervading ‘crises of governance’ became the pretext for General Musharraf to stage a military coup in October 1999. The international political environment became favourable to his rule when Pakistan once again became the ‘front line’ state in the U.S. war on terror after 9/11. To ‘serve’ and give ‘rights’ to the citizens of Pakistan, he put in place a new local government structure called ‘devolution of power’ to bring ‘good governance’, the framework for which was largely World Bank-driven (Craig and Porter, 2006). It was characterised by (1) fiscal decentralisation, (2) subservience of bureaucracy to the local councillors and (3) a set of laws to
make the councillors and public executives accountable to the citizens (Craig and Porter, 2006: 199-200). The ‘reform’ has been criticised on many fronts but for the purpose of this thesis two issues are worthy of notice. It is contended that the local government system ‘… had been appropriated for mobilising support for Musharraf’s presidential referendum [in April 2002]’ (Khan, 2015: 579). The observation seems valid, given that the referendum took place in the absence of national and provincial governments. Moreover, election to local government took place on ‘non-party’ basis. This means that, just as in Ayub’s Basic Democracies and in Zia’s era, it merely strengthened clientelistic elements in local politics as, in practice, members of various political parties contested election, using alternative symbols and metaphors and, once elected, they resorted to the use of money to buy off the independently elected councillors (Khan, 2015). With such structured interests in place, the apparently ‘new’ local government set up could not function as means for rights-based development of the common people. As an illustration, a reference to Malik’s (2009) account of the day-to-day workings of the Nazim, the leader of the Tehsil Council in the current local government set up is made to make the point clear. According to him, a nazim’s office is an extension of his rural court or fief as it is run

... on the principles of reciprocity of relationships and patronage at the village level, where, like a Zamindar ..., the nazim is supposed to oblige and entertain everyone personally in his office. However, this is only a part of his performance, intended to present himself as a neutral leader caring for everyone beyond his biradari loyalties. ... The emphasis of his governance is not on a rational development policy and its equitable implementation, but on patronage (Malik, 2009: 1005).

The brief review of development in Pakistan’s local government demonstrates that the entrenchment of institutional arrangements has obstructed change (Levi, 1997) that is geared towards serving the political and socially excluded segments at the
grassroots. Moreover, every ‘change’ has reinforced existing processes (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2004) particularly the patronage-based relationships between the citizens and the state actors (Gough et al., 2004). It is amidst such politico-economic changes that Pakistan’s NGO sector evolved from merely providing humanitarian and relief services to wider engagement in community development, democratisation and empowerment as well as in the provision of public services. The following section presents a brief review of NGOs’ evolution in Pakistan, with particular reference to the factors in their evolution and contribution along with the scope of their activities.

4.4 NGOs in Pakistan: Trajectories of Growth

Like much of the developing world, NGOs in Pakistan largely played a welfare and relief role between its independence and the early 1980s (ADB, 1999). The only partial exception to this observation could be Bhutto’s regime (1971-77). Being a socialist regime, his government allowed for the growth of the trade unions, students associations and women’s rights organisations. Women’s NGOs, such as Shirkatgah, presumably emerged in part out of the influence of the UN’s international year of women in 1975 and the UN’s women’s decade (1976-85) (Iqbal et al., 2004).

NGOs began to grow during the 1980s. The primary impulse came from the UN and the World Bank. As noted in Chapter 2 (p. 32-36), these institutions promoted NGOs out of the assumption about ‘failure’ of state-led development in developing countries and their potential for democratisation and empowerment as well as their effectiveness in service delivery. It might be questionable in relation to other developing countries but keeping in view the review of major political developments in Pakistan (section 4.3) the assertion seems to hold ground. In addition to this,
other domestic and international factors also played a role in the growth of NGOs. As noted above, military dictators in Pakistan have always promulgated ordinances and policies that would gain them public legitimacy (Craig and Porter, 2006: 185-216). Thus, quite early after taking over power from Bhutto, General Zia expounded his philosophy of social work and welfare along with the promulgation of Local Government Ordinance in 1979. Funds were allocated for NGOs, which they were supposed to spend through the local government structure (ADB, 1999: 3). In addition to this, most NGOs provided emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees who had migrated into Pakistan after the USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan. According to Hasan (2015: 27), the US’s aid for Afghan mujahideen stood at an estimated US$5-7 billion in the first half of 1980s. NGOs also surged in the wake of the 1985 ‘non-party’ elections when ‘… many legislators encouraged the growth of new NGOs to absorb the special funds available to them for the development of their constituencies’ (ADB, 1999: 3). Thirdly, Zia’s regime was also marked by its repression of political liberties and enactment of contentious laws under his Islamisation programme. Since the period coincided with international support for gender and development, a number of women’s rights NGOs grew to challenge the controversial laws (Jafar, 2007; 2011). Overall, 1980s was marked more for the growth of humanitarian NGOs and, to a lesser extent, women NGOs. This is substantiated by Key’s (1990: 194) findings that Pakistan’s ‘… voluntary sector is small, largely made up of women and women’s groups, lacks dynamism, has a welfare focus and is dominated by a few standard NGOs with close ties to the political and bureaucratic elite’. The two frequently identified examples of successful NGOs formed prior to the implementation of neoliberal policies of SAPs were the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Karachi (OPP, 2016; Khan and Khan, 2004) and the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas of Pakistan (Ebrahim, 2003; Khan and Khan, 2004).
The post-Zia period was particularly marked by NGOs' growth. This was primarily due to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). For instance, inspired by the reported success of AKRSP (see, for example, World Bank, 2002a), a number of NGOs emerged in the 1990s to replicate its model for rural development. The World Bank and IMF encouraged public-private partnerships (PPPs) for effective service delivery (see Chapter 2, p. 32-36). Following this, in 1992, the government of Pakistan launched the Social Action Programme (SAP) (Iqbal et al., 2004) which ran until 2003 (Altarf, 2011; Candland, 2001). Similarly, provincial governments also undertook PPPs with NGOs. For instance, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province ran a 6-year project, worth US $ 42 million, in partnership with the an NGO in four districts to mobilise farmers and link them to agricultural extension departments (Brinkerhoff, 2003). Similarly, in 1999 the government of the province of Punjab entrusted an NGO, Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP), to run a multi-year primary healthcare project in some districts (Khan, 2010; cf. Ejaz et al., 2011).

Since Pakistan became a ‘major non-NATO ally of the United States’ (U.S. Government, 2009: n.p.) after 9/11, it has attracted significant international aid. According to a report from the British House of Lords, ‘...in 1999 Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan together accounted for less than 1% of global official aid; five years later they accounted for 25 %’ (House of Lords, 2012: 20). According to the same report, Pakistan was expected to be the largest recipient of UK’s bilateral aid in 2014-15 (House of Lords, 2012: 39). Similarly, in recognition of Pakistan’s ‘long history of friendship and comity’ with the U.S (U.S. Government, 2009), the U.S. Senate passed ‘Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009’ authorising three times increase in economic and development assistance to $7.5 billion between 2010 and 2014 (CGD, n.d.). Since 30 % of development aid to Pakistan is
channelled through NGOs and community based organisation (Bano, 2012: xi), it can be safely assumed that quite a large number of NGOs might be engaged in development activities. Moreover, keeping in mind the humanitarian and political crises from 2005 onwards (see p. 107), we can also assume that the sector might have expanded.

The ‘... nearly lifeless voluntary sector...’ of the late 1980s (Key, 1990: 323) has thrived to play a strategic role in development and humanitarian activities. However, it is far from certain that NGOs have been able to achieve their aims and objectives. Alongside this, researches on different aspects of the NGO sector have been also produced. For instance, as referred to in Chapter 2 (p. 44), Bano (2008a; 2008b; 2012) has analysed the impact of aid on Pakistani NGOs and CBOs in relation to mobilising members. Others (e.g., Bano, 2011; Ejaz et al., 2011; Rose, 2011a; 2011b; Sansom, 2011) have analysed different aspects of partnerships between government and NGOs, while Khan (2003), Khan et al., (2005), and Shah (2009) have compared the potential and efficacy of educational and community development services of NGOs and government. Research on service aspect of Pakistani NGOs is an indication that, under the influence of neoliberal policies, they have increasingly become important players in the ‘statist' regime (Salamon and Anheier, 1996; 1998) of Pakistan. There is also an implicit indication that in the changing politico-economic context of the country, especially since 9/11, empowerment and change-oriented NGOs might be potentially facing difficulties to work for bottom up change in the rural areas. It might also be difficult to institute change in people’s thinking about personal and local development in an environment where they have been socialised to receive services through personalised, patronage-based mechanisms. The following four data chapters
address this overall issue to determine both the extent to which NGOs in Pakistan can bring bottom up change and the factors influencing their aims in this regard.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the wider socio-political and economic context of NGOs’ emergence in Pakistan. It has demonstrated that their emergence in Pakistan can best be understood in terms of the conceptual characteristics of the ‘statist regime’ in the social origin theory. To verify this claim, the chapter presented evidence regarding the government’s low budgetary allocation to vital social sectors, such as health and education and the size and scope of the NGO-sector. The chapter also presented evidence regarding the increasing vitality of the NGO sector as a result of humanitarian and political crises that Pakistan faced in the first decade of the 21st century. The chapter argued that the ‘statist regime’ of Pakistan owes its genesis to partisan and patronage-based politics which has been dominated by the landed elites, the bureaucrats and the army. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the dominance of elites, whose policies and political activities have been never people-centred is traceable to the colonial policies, particularly with regard to the development of agriculture. This being the case, Pakistan’s political history has been demonstrated to have been the story of alternations between the civilian rule dominated by landed elites and military rulers, none of whose socio-economic policies in general and local government in particular have been framed in a decentralised and accountable manner. As a result, NGOs, which primarily played a humanitarian and relief role both during the colonial period and three decades after independence, gradually gained salience as service-providers and as agents of community-based change at the grassroots.
The chapter also presented the specific factors that led to the preponderance of variety of NGOs in 1980s and afterwards. In this regard, the chapter presented some concrete examples of NGOs’ engagement in service-delivery in partnership with the national and provincial governments of Pakistan. This was meant to demonstrate the increasingly important development role played by the NGOs. Additionally, the chapter referred to the community development agenda of some of the NGOs. In this regard, the chapter referred to micro-social structure of Pakistani society to highlight that, historically, local people have been socialised to receive services in a personalised and patronage-based environment. This being the case, the chapter ended with a question as to whether participatory, community-oriented NGOs can dismantle the patronage-based structure and socialise people at the grassroots in the spirit of self-help, in order to enable them to work for their own development. This aspect of the research is dealt with in detail in chapters 5 to 8.
Chapter 5 – A Mirage of Honourable Ambition? An Historical Account of RDO

5.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter offered a brief overview of the historical and politico-economic context of NGOs in Pakistan. It demonstrated that NGOs’ rise and proliferation was mainly due to a chronic lack of accountability in governing structures, poor service delivery to ordinary people and an overall elitist political regime in Pakistan. This chapter begins the analysis of the empirical data to specifically address the following sub-question:

*Under what politico-economic contexts and with what approach to social change was RDO established?*

The chapter begins by tracing the foundational history of RDO. The section is specifically an historical narrative, which seeks to address two aspects of its establishment. Firstly, it considers the extent to which the wider politico-economic factors became conducive to its establishment. Secondly, it considers the types of ideological factors that contributed to its establishment. Keeping DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory about processes of isomorphism in view, the second section analytically describes both its approach to social change as well as its underlying assumptions. In addition to this, mindful of Hall’s (1989b; see also Hall and Taylor’s, 1996) view regarding the importance of ‘ideas’ in the establishment of institutions, the section traces the philosophical bases of RDO’s approach to social change and the means by which it culminated in the Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach in RDO. Finally, to make sense of how the philosophic ideas and
assumptions are actually practiced, the section presents the implementation strategy and evolution of the RSP approach. Following from this and keeping in view the possibility of path dependence, the final section critically engages with the evolution and present-day practices of the organisation regarding the RSP approach to determine whether or not it is evolutionary and adaptive in terms of bringing democratic change and empowerment in the rural areas. In this regard, the chapter particularly focuses on the organisation's achievements in organising the rural poor and the intervening factors and processes that might have isomorphic (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991) and path dependent (Pierson, 2000) effects.

5.1 The Rural Development Organisation (RDO): The Process and Rationale for Establishment

RDO was originally a Government Organised NGO (GONGO). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a financial grant and the government, in consultation with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), conducted a feasibility study for its establishment (RDO, n.d.). The study became the basis for RDO's establishment in the 1990s under Section 42 of the 'Companies Ordinance act 1984' (RDO, 2015c). The staff members, however, contested the notion of it being GONGO on two grounds. Firstly, the organisation retained complete independence, regarding which Mr. Jumma, who had been in the organisation for more than a decade, reflected as follows.

18 'AKF is the key rural development body within the larger transnational Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), led by the hereditary imam [Aga Khan] of the Isma’ili Muslims’ (Manetta and Steinberg, 2008: 3).

19 It is one of the four frequently used acts for the registration of NGOs in Pakistan. The other three are the ‘Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control Ordinance), 1961’, ‘the Societies Registration Act, 1860’ and ‘The Trust Act II, 1882’ (Ghaus-Pasha et al., 2002: 4; see also ADB, 1999; Ismail, 2002; Ismail, n.d.).
Ex-officio members sat on its Board of Directors [BoD] but in terms of agenda setting and programme goals we were completely independent. At the end of 1999, the government tried to control it as it was its major funder but the BoD repulsed and resultantly funding was stopped. The BoD changed the management of RDO.

Smillie and Hailey (2000: 29) have also endorsed RDO’s organisational autonomy for ‘its demonstrated financial and policy-related independence from government’. Similarly, Brinkerhoff (2003: 114) has commended it for ‘demonstrated track record of social mobilisation and service to defined constituencies other than the government’. In addition to highlighting its independence from the government, the experienced staff members also considered it distinctively superior to other NGOs. In this regard, Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), Management Coordinator, said:

We are not – in the strictest sense – an NGO [emphasis original]. Why? Because we are working with the government. We are facilitators. If someone wants to facilitate development we work with them whether government or nongovernment.

The claims about RDO’s independence in decision-making and distinctiveness from other ‘NGOs’ will become clearer when I explain the philosophical ideas underlying its approach to social change and the operational procedures for realising it. For now, I will explain the political economy context of its emergence in the following paragraphs.

A number of factors contributed to the government’s initiative in establishing RDO. Firstly, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (p. 20-23), 1980s was marked by the introduction of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) and perception about the failure of state-led development in developing countries. As shown in Chapter 4 (p. 111-19), this assertion was largely valid in relation to Pakistan. Particularly, its rural areas had perpetually faced the dual problems of gaps in service-delivery and their exclusion from mainstream economic activities (Rasmussen et al., 2007: 138). The
foundational document of RDO also refers to the scarcity of resources with the
government to reach out to the poor and bureaucrats’ aloofness from their concerns
and problems as the reasons for the establishment of RDO (RDO, n.d.: 17-35).
Secondly, multilateral (e.g., World Bank) and bilateral donors (e.g., USAID) were
interested in working with and through NGOs, but the existing organisations were
professionally incompetent (Key, 1990: 323). This, according to Smith et al. (1993),
became the reason for the government’s interest in the NGO sector. Relatedly, in
the 1980s, as a ‘front-line’ state in the war against the USSR, Pakistan received aid,
especially from the US. In fact, at one time, USAID gave 60 % of its total
development aid to Pakistan (Chaudhry et al., n.d.: 75-6). Thirdly, the democratic
elections in 1988 (Pasha, 1997) also created an ample environment for the growth
of NGOs (Sims, 1997). Finally, and most importantly, the government’s exposure to
the apparent achievements of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in
the Northern Areas of Pakistan (RDO, n.d.: 3-4) became a major reason for the
establishment of RDO along the lines of its approach (Smillie and Hailey, 2000).

AKRSP was set up in late 1981 (Khan, 2009a). It had an indigenously evolved
approach to rural development (Rasmussen et al., 2007) under the terms of which it
was mandated to help communities

(a) form social organisations around a sustainable productive activity
in which the members would participate on a long-term basis, (b)
genenerate savings to build equity capital to be used as collateral to
obtain loans for individual and collective investments, and (c) develop
skills to increase productive capacity at the local level (Khan, 2009a:
98-9) (see Figure 5.1, p. 129).

Following the approach, AKRSP organised 1,477 village organisations (VOs), which
had collectively generated ‘nearly a hundred million [Pakistani] rupees as savings…
and getting an army of rural cadres trained comprising 3,000 village managers, over
5,000 village level livestock, plant protection, marketing, poultry, and forestry
specialists, half of whom [were] women’ (Khan, 1992: 250). Relatively recently, the World Bank (2002a: xi; see also, Khan, 2009a: 94-137) declared it as ‘… a model for rural programmes throughout the country and across the globe’.

**Figure 5.1: Conceptual and Organisational Model of the RSP Approach**

In terms of DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) typology regarding ‘institutional isomorphism’ in organisation (Chapter 2, p. 49), it can be argued that the purported success of the AKRSP in an environment of relative professional inadequacy of NGOs (Key, 1990; Smith et al., 1993) created ‘mimetic’ pressure (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: 69-70) for the government of the KP to fashioning RDO along its model (Smillie and Hailey, 2000: 13). Since AKRSP was an organisational model that had reportedly retained over time (Rowan, 1982), the founders might have
found it easier to adopt this ‘successful’ model than to go by ‘trial and error’. The ‘mimetic’ influence of the AKRSP model is particularly palpable from the justification for RDO’s establishment, which have been given in detail in the foundational document of the organisation. For instance, the foundational document argued that there was a lack of consensus-based participatory approach to rural development at the lowest tier of local government and the weakening of traditional institutions of *jirga*. *Jirga*, etymologically, a Mongolian term meaning circle (Glatzer, 2002: 75), is a traditional institution primarily for dispute settlement in Pashtun social structure. It settles disputes according to *Pashtunwali*, a code of ethics in Pashtun society (Noelle-Karimi, 2006). To address the ‘weaknesses’ of traditional institutions, the foundational document presented the AKRSP model as the most suitable intervention strategy.

I have already explained the factors and processes of patronage-based functioning of public and electoral offices in Pakistan (Chapter 4, p. 111-19). As the fieldwork for this thesis was carried out in the province of Khyber Pakthunkhwa, in which RDO worked for the democratisation and empowerment in rural areas, so, before further describing the justification for the establishment of the organisation, it seems relevant to outline the social structural features of the province in broader terms.

An overwhelming majority of people in the KP and FATA\(^{20}\) are ethnically identified as Pashtuns, who together with their ‘tribal’ cousins across the British delineated Durand line (i.e., Pakistan-Afghanistan border) form the world’s largest ‘tribal’ group (Glatzer, 2002) of 40 million people (Kerr, 2010: 1). Viewed in terms of Gough et al.’s (2004) framework of ‘informal security regime’ (see Chapter 2, p. 54-62), Pashtun society is characteristically patronage-based, which is the result of

\(^{20}\) see footnote no. 17.
compromises made on the basis of ethnicity, class and gender. Particularly, ethnic and gender identities intersect with each other to create hierarchies of relationships based on mutual-reciprocity.

Pashtuns speak the Pashtu language and practice Pashtunwali, an ideal cultural code of conduct (Ahmed, 1980). Pashtunwali together with Pashtuns’ conception and practice of Islam intersects with class, ethnic and gender hierarchies which arguably leads to emergence and persistence of an ‘informal security regime’. Pashtuns not only invoke Pashtunwali to distinctively distinguish themselves from other ethno-linguistic groups (Rzehak, 2011) but they also use it to categorise each other: whether or not a person in question supports his/her kinsmen in a feud, contest for electoral office and competition for public office are the commonly occurring phenomena in which those supporting their kins from in-group/tribe are marked as Pashtuns of high stature. Simultaneously, Pashtun social structure is characterised by ‘tarboorwali, or cousin rivalry, and siyali, or status envy, [which] are key factors, so that even within small family groups there are sources of tension and centrifugal pressure’ (Ginsburg, 2011: 96). Just as in other regions of Pakistan, it is not surprising to find Pashtuns using elected and public offices for personal benefits, their extended family and/or their larger kin/ethnic group. Likewise, it is also possible to see them using authority of their (public) office to deprive their competitors (out of tarboorwali/siyali) from public goods and services.

Pashtuns are also considered the most conservative of all the ethno-linguistic groups in Pakistan when it comes to gender relations. Here too, the codes of conduct in Pashtunwali influences if not determines the patriarchal power structure both inside and outside the confines of family. For instance, male elder – for example, husband, father, guardian, brother, or uncle – has the authority to lead household affairs and manage relationships with outsiders but also to decide the
division of labour inside the household (Ahmed, 2005). Women and girls in the household are hardly consulted even on matters that directly impinge on their lives such as the (non)attainment of education, when and whom to marry, whom to meet and whether to get paid work or not. Hence, it is not surprising to find women's low visibility and participation in formal political, economic and public affairs. The foregoing illustration can perhaps be summed up with the insightful comments of Tainter and MacGregor’s (2011), according to whom

… male honour and family honour derive from a code of conduct [i.e., Pashtunwali] governing women. Women will not normally interact with unrelated males, even if they live within the same household. Notwithstanding the spirit of democracy, … the central issues of Pashtun society revolve around the pursuit of power, status, and honour within the tribal genealogical framework (Tainter and MacGregor, 2011: 6).

Although the gradual spread of education and communication technologies, especially since the 1990s might have slightly relaxed the practice of Pashtunwali along with gender-based and ethnic hierarchies, nonetheless, it would be fair to say that by and large this code of conduct still dominates Pashtun’s way of life in both private and public spheres particularly in the rural areas.

Keeping this general description of the province along with the analysis of Pakistani state in view (Chapter 4, p. 111-19), it can be said that RDO was mandated to democratise a society where ‘[m]arkets are imperfect, communities clientelist, households patriarchal and states marketised, patrimonial, partial and based on political clientelism’ (Wood, 2004: 58). In accordance with the AKRSP model, RDO mandated itself to establish consensus-based Village Organisations (VOs) as they

… constitute the missing link between resource availability and sustainable development, and between ordinary villagers and higher-level organisations. … It is proposed that participatory village organisation be accepted as the bases for the establishment of RDO (RDO, n.d.: 18).
Once established, VOs would function both as ‘economies of scale’ and ‘demand-generators’ for services from the government (RDO, n.d.: 2-3), thus operating as catalyst for their own development whether served by RDO, or clubbed together with other private, non-profit and/or government agencies. The approach to work as catalysts for ‘… community-driven model of development that seeks to simultaneously empower people and improve service delivery’ (Rasmussen et al., 2007: 136-8) is known as the Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach.

Following this approach, RDO has undergone a considerable expansion both in terms of geographic outreach and programmatic diversity: Currently, it is working in all the districts in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province; it has accessed 809,180 households and organised them in 34,366 neighbourhood/street-level Community Based Organisations (CBOs), some of which have been federated at village level into 2,252 Village Organisations (VOs) and 123 Local Support Organisations (LSOs) (RDO, 2015a: 6).

Thus far, I have sketched the politico-economic context of RDO’s establishment and the ‘mimetic’ significance of the AKRSP model. The uniqueness and reported success of AKRSP also explains, in part, the reason for Mr. Nashir’s claim reproduced above (p. 127) that ‘we are not an NGO…’. In addition to it, however, there is an historical reason for the staff-members to consider RDO as distinctively different from other NGOs. In the words of one of the experienced employees, Ms. Aruj (age: 50s), ‘we didn’t get a ready-made model from anywhere. It has incrementally changed and grown’. The claim to originality appears valid in that the operational principles and philosophical ideas underlying the ‘AKRSP/RSP’ model are based on an experiment in rural development in Pakistan in the 1970s, which was a practical adaptation of the Western European cooperatives model. In order to determine the ‘originality’ of the RSP model, it appears relevant to trace the
sociological and politico-economic factors that became the basis for a rural development experiment in Pakistan. Dwelling on its historical lineage will also help us understand its operational strategy as well as its potential efficacy in bringing social change. The following two sections, therefore, briefly present the evolution of the model and its philosophical bases.

### 5.2 The Rural Support Programme (RSP) Approach: Historical Bases and Underlying Philosophy

#### 5.2.1 Historical Bases

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (p. 50-54), historical institutionalists consider the role of political economy and ideas important in the emergence and endurance of institutions (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Steinmo, 2008). In this section, I primarily follow Hall’s lead (1989b) on the role of ideas in the development and shaping of institutions, which for the present purpose is the inspiration behind the RSP-based organisational practices for social change in the rural areas of Pakistan. This section solely presents the emergence and evolution of the approach in Pakistan. Once this has been described, I will then present its European roots in the next section.

The conceptual bases of what is now called the ‘RSP model’ or ‘AKRSP model’ lies in a rural development experiment at Comilla*, a town in East Pakistan (now, Bangladesh). The then newly established Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARD)*, under the tutelage of its Director, Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan* (henceforth, Dr. Akhtar), undertook a pilot project in 1959. Dr. Akhtar took the initiatives to set up model rural cooperatives (Choldin, 1972). In addition to working as savings and credit bodies, the cooperatives performed the two additional functions of (1) delivering adult education services and (2) testing and introducing new agriculture technology (Choldin, 1969: 485). Farmers were organised in cooperatives with the
mandate to practice compulsory savings, keep records of that and nominate candidates for credit from the cooperative bank (Karim, 1985-86). By 1961, when about 30 village cooperatives had been formed, they were organised into a federation, which worked as a coordinating body and served as an educational centre for the farmers. Each village cooperative would send its elected member for weekly training to the federal cooperative; the farmers would share the learning with fellow cooperative members. Secondly, the condition of social collateral was introduced in relation to providing credit to farmers, i.e., the whole group had to provide surety on behalf of an applicant for credit. Thirdly, the federation also operated as centre for the provision and sale of agriculture inputs and as rental centre for tractors (Choldin, 1972: 683-4). The staff members were advised to act as learners in terms of observing farmers and in terms of conducting interviews during their interaction with the peasants. In contrast to prior community development programmes for reliance on external ‘Community Development Worker (CDW)’, the Comilla project introduced the concept and practice of (i) insider (village-member) as change agent, (ii) learning as group-process and (iii) a strong built-in feedback and response mechanism (Choldin, 1969: 484). The result was the successful establishment and running of cooperatives in a society where the government of British India and the government of Pakistan (after independence) had failed (Choldin, 1972: 681-2).

Comilla was widely cited as 'one of the most successful models of rural development programmes' (Karim, 1985-86: 6) owing to its strong organisational and conceptual components. However, it suffered from some limitations. As part of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which began in the early 1970s (Ruttan, 1984), when the Bangladesh government replicated the model on a wider scale, it experienced severe setbacks as it became a mechanism ‘for
imposing centrally mandated programmes on communities rather than instruments that enable communities to mobilise their own resources for development’ (Ruttan, 1984: 395-96). For instance, when the programme expanded, large-landowners began dominating the cooperatives, often extracting and appropriating credit for their own consumption. Similarly, at pilot level, there were strict credit monitoring mechanisms but, after the extension, this element eroded and, on many occasions, credit inspectors were found to have borrowed credit for themselves and defaulted (Karim, 1985-86: 14). Nonetheless, Dr. Akhtar’s approach was considered such a success that it became a model for the ‘Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU)’ in Ethiopia (Karim, 1985-86: 25-35). His approach is also considered to have inspired Mohammad Yunus*, the founder of the Grameen Bank, to initiate microfinance (Boyatzis and Khawaja, 2014; Yousaf, 2014) and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), one of the largest NGOs in Bangladesh (Yousaf, 2014).

When IRDP began in 1970s in Pakistan, Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan (henceforth, Mr. Shoaib)*, as the Director of the Pakistan Academy of Rural Development (PARD) at Peshawar, requested Dr. Akhtar to help him design a project along the lines of Comilla. Thus in 1972, a pilot project at Daudzai*, an administrative unit of 79.5 square miles spanning over 89 villages in Peshawar, was implemented (Khan, 1976; Khan, 2009b: 24-40). Thereafter, in 1982, Mr. Shoaib became the General Manager of Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)* in the Northern areas of Pakistan replicating the same organisational model. The success of AKRSP in Pakistan inspired the establishment of AKRSP in India (Ebrahim, 2003), the establishment of RDO (RDO, n.d.) and a number of other Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in the 1990s throughout Pakistan (Rasmussen et al., 2007; Khan, 2009a). As of yet, there are 11 RSPs, which are operating in 125 out of 144
districts in Pakistan (see Figure 5.2, p. 138). They are all part of the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN), an umbrella organisation of all those organisations subscribing to the Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach (RSPN, 2016a).

So far, I have sketched the programmatic lineage of the approach. As stated above, Dr. Akhtar’s model was an adaptation of cooperatives based on the ideas of utopian socialists. So, following Hall (1989b), the following section goes farther back in history to briefly trace the ideas of utopian socialists, which became the basis for the establishment of cooperatives in Western Europe and gradually diffused into the Indian sub-continent to take the shape of Comilla experiment.
**Figure 5.2: Members of Rural Support Programmes Network**

### The Outreach of the Rural Support Programmes Across Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
<th>RSP’s presence in Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balochistan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPK</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJK</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATA/FRs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
<td><strong>125</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RSPs are present in 125 districts including 5 FATA/FR Agencies.

**Source:** RSPN (2016a: 5)
5.2.2 The Underlying Assumptions of the RSP Approach

The foundational document of RDO (RDO, n.d.: 115) and others (e.g., Khan, 1976; 2009a; 2009b) explicitly refer to the legacy of European cooperatives as the bedrock of the ideas underlying the RSP model. For instance, according to Khan (2009a: 90),

[T]he roots of this model are found in the social philosophy of Utopian Socialists in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The basic organisational structure dates back to 1844 when the first consumer co-operatives were established in England under the Rochdale principles of open membership and democratic control. The same principles in a somewhat modified form were used by F.W. Raiffeisen in Germany for the rural cooperative credit societies in the 1860s and 1870s.

The ideas of the utopian socialists, such as St. Simon and Charles Fourier in France and Robert Owen in England, were formed in the backdrop of industrial capitalism (Taylor, 1982). For them, ‘[t]he spreading of market economy was destroying the traditional fabric of the rural society, the village community, the family, the old form of land tenure, the customs and standards that supported life within a cultural framework’ (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 303). To tackle the ‘crises’, the utopians called for the establishment of ‘social harmony’, which they believed could be achieved by inculcating a sense of (i) association, (ii) community and (iii) cooperation among the marginalised and the indigents (Taylor, 1982). ‘Association’ implied that industrial workers would work together to achieve better working conditions; similarly, in response to the process of individualisation brought about by industrialisation, they argued for people’s living together as ‘communities’; finally, in response to the separation between the employer and employees in industries, they emphasised garnering cooperation. In short, the notion of social harmony implied ‘… a distinctive view of social relations according to which a great premium was placed on the
capacity of members of society to live together without conflict and with common interests, united by ties of true love and affection’ (Taylor, 1982: 4).

The practical demonstration for developing ‘social harmony’ came in the shape of Robert Owen’s experiment in establishing a cotton mill at New Lanark in Scotland. Convinced that individuals’ behaviour was shaped by their social environment (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]), he organised the cotton mill workforce in a socially cohesive and learning-oriented environment. For instance, he introduced new work ethics, provided improved working conditions, educational centre for children of workers (Taylor, 1982: 73-76) and ‘[w]hilst his competitors worked their people thirteen or fourteen hours a day, in New Lanark the working day was only ten and a half hour’ (Engels, 1977 [1901]: 41). His experiment inspired the formation of a variety of cooperative societies, such as agricultural producers’ societies, Operative Builders’ Unions, trade unions (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 177) and retail cooperatives (Williams, 2007: 10). The formation of retail cooperative Rochdale (England) in 1844 was especially inspirational for other European countries. Germany, in particular, became the ‘cradle of cooperative credit’ wherein Schulz-Delitzsch and F.W. Raiffeisen undertook the cooperative initiative (Williams, 2007: 24). While working as Mayor for several rural communities in Rhine valley, Raiffeisen noticed the financial difficulties faced by farmers, who owing to money-lenders’ high interest rates (de Smeyers, 1895), ‘… would literally give away both stock and implements to the usurer, in return for temporary financial relief’ (Dawson, 1902: 328). In the urge to relieve farmers from the exploitative conditions, he experimented with forming cooperative credit associations (de Smeyers, 1895). The cooperatives were initially formed in the Rhine valley (Dawson, 1902) and, by the time of his death in 1888, 423 local cooperatives had been ‘… loosely federated into a type of cooperative regional bank owned by the local co-op banks’ (Williams, 2007: 25).
The organisational set up was introduced in India in the form of ‘The Cooperative Societies Act, 1925’ (Ismail, 2002; n.d.), which, in the post partition period, was adopted by Dr. Akhtar in Comilla and later on in Daudzai (Peshawar) (Wood and Shakeel, 2006). As stated above, this framework is now known as the ‘Rural Support Programme (RSP)’ approach. However, since its adoption by the RDO, the model has incrementally evolved. In order to critically analyse its evolution since the inception of the organisation, the following section presents the intervention strategy of the approach as it was practiced originally. Once this has been described, we will be better able to critically assess the factors in its evolution.

5.3 Organisation Strategy for the Rural Support Programme (RSP) Approach

Organisationally, the RSP approach is based on three components, viz. a support programme, participants and a programme of interventions to be undertaken (Khan, 2009a). Khan (1992) has termed it as the ‘conceptual package’, which, according to an ex-Agricultural Officer of RDO, Mr. Faraan (age: 40s), involved ‘four things, namely, village organisation, savings for capital generation, linkages with government and non-government organisations, and enterprise development’. The conceptual package is based on ‘… the assumption that it is best achieved through ‘learning-by-doing’ and not by following a blue print or plan’ (Khan, 2009a: 46).

To work with the villagers, RDO would establish a Social Organisation Unit (SOU). The SOU was supposed to be headed by a Social Organiser (SO), who was the first line of contact between the organisation and the community. The SO was supposed to establish Village Organisations (VOs). To establish VOs, the Social Organiser would work as ‘… a catalyst to the village organisation to develop itself around at
least one major activity or project…’ (Khan, 1988: 386). The ex-Agricultural Officer, Mr. Faraan (age: 40s) reflected on the centrality and significance of SO thus:

My job was not service delivery, my job was to bridge the gap between the various organisations and the community. We would introduce line agencies, for example, department of education, agriculture, livestock etc. and agriculture officers to the community in a meeting and at the level of the village. They would tell the community about different services rendered by their departments. We would create demand in community for services. We would brief line agencies on community needs and encourage them on service-delivery to community.

The first step in the process involved the formation of VOs for the establishment of which the SO along with his team-members would visit villages to begin ‘three dialogues’, which was actually a series of meetings with the communities (Wood and Shakeel, 2006: 383). In the initial contact or the first dialogue, information would be collected

from the village regarding the number of households, the structure and sizes of the households, the number of people, the size of land ownership, the type of ownership etc. this would be collected along with the introduction of our programme. Along with that we would clearly tell that our programme would only support them in a scheme, which could lead to their economic well-being.

--- Mr. Sarmad, (age: 50s), ex-Project Coordinator

The ‘first dialogue’ would often comprise of a series of meetings spanning over a number of weeks, in which the villagers would be offered ‘development partnership’. The terms of partnership would be dictated by two conditions: firstly, people were asked to organise themselves to work cooperatively; secondly, they were asked to begin regular savings, which they were supposed to use for their personal productive investment and for collective activities in the neighbourhood.

Understanding that ‘… it would be impossible for the poor to rise above the level of subsistence without outside assistance’ (Khan, 1992: 251), RDO would allocate a
one-off grant for investment in a physical infrastructure scheme, which would become the basis for the second ‘dialogue’. In the second series of meetings, villagers would be guided to unanimously identify a scheme that would contribute to the ‘... twin objective of responding to the identified need of a VO [Village Organisation] and strengthening the organisation’ (Khan, 1992: 251). Following this, another (third) dialogue would be held with the entire village, particularly with those who attended the previous dialogues. At this stage RDO would sign ‘Terms of Partnership (ToP)’ with the VO, which meant the villagers would maintain their organisation and would conduct meetings. After that the engineer would tell the details that it [the scheme] would require that much cement, this much that and this much that and this is the total cost. Then we would announce to them that we would provide the money for the scheme in 4 instalments to their VO [Village Organisation].

--- Mr. Sarmad, (age: 50s), ex-Project Coordinator

The above activities simultaneously took place along the process of identifying potential training needs of the community. The village leadership would be delivered training, which mostly comprised of education about bookkeeping, maintaining monthly savings, holding meetings and resolution of problems of local concern. Additionally, the organisational members would also be trained in animal husbandry, horticulture, enterprise development etc. For members interested in beginning or expanding income-generating activities, RDO would also offer them investment capital through ‘group security ... at affordable cost’ (Khan, 2009a: 56). Finally, RDO would also coordinate with other outside agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, to link the communities and socialise them to demand services from them (RDO, n.d.; Khan, 2009a: 55). This was partly a strategy for exit from the area (RDO, n.d.) and partly because, according to the Project Assistant, Mr. Imtihaan (age: 40s), ‘we couldn’t do all things’. In this regard, RDO would give them exposure
visits to various governments departments, particularly agricultural extension services, and other successful Village Organisations (VO). This supposedly helped them to appreciate the benefits of collective working and to learn about the opportunities on which they could draw in the future. For instance, if a school was needed in the area, they could contact relevant government departments and develop linkages with other NGOs for the solution of that problem. In this sense, VOs were considered to be working as ‘demand-making’ institutions (RDO, n.d.).

I have explained in Chapter 2 (p. 24-32) that NGOs are broadly divisible into two types, viz., radical/political and service/neoliberal (Edwards, 2011; Heyse, 2006). However, the foregoing description about the underlying ideas of RDO’s developmental approach and its practical strategies does not allow its neat categorisation in either of the two types. Perhaps, it would be appropriate to say that RDO is an organisation that aims at a broad-based democratic development of rural men and women by undertaking a complex set of activities. Going beyond the mere notion of ‘self-help’, it not only organises poor people and develops their physical, financial and social capital, but it also links them to other civil society organisations as well as to various government departments. RDO’s operational goals and strategy appear to be potentially playing a vital role in socialising the rural poor for collective action to actively seek support from government departments and civil society organisations.

The question, however, is whether RDO performs these functions accordingly and if it does, then do these lead to a degree of success according to the expected outcomes or are they mediated by some factors. Since, according to Ms. Aruj’s statement (p. 133), the RSP approach has evolved ‘incrementally’, therefore, it seems appropriate to critically explore the reasons underlying in its ‘evolution’ in the
organisational history of RDO. The following section presents the factors that influenced RDO to change and 'improve' the RSP model.

5.3.1 The Three-tiered Social Mobilisation Strategy of the RSP Approach

This section presents the reasons for the organisational innovation of 'three-tiered social mobilisation' in RDO. Keeping DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983; 1991) theory in view, it will be shown that RDO’s adoption of the three-tiered social mobilisation strategy has been partly out of ‘mimetic’ isomorphism and partly out of ‘normative’ isomorphism. As explained in Chapter 2 (p. 49), ‘mimetic isomorphism’ refers to the process when an organisation adopts the procedures and practices of those organisations, which are considered ‘successful’. The process, which is triggered by an organisation’s uncertainty about its own practices, tends to make it similar to other organisations in the long run. Similarly, an organisation can be subject to ‘normative isomorphism’. That is it can also become similar to other organisations when the organisation adopts those practices, which are considered ‘professional’ in its area or field of its specialism. Keeping these two analytical concepts in view, it will be shown that RDO constantly faced the challenge to establish a mechanism at village level whereby communities would remain active after its ‘exit’. The challenge created a ‘vacuum’ in the organisation for the adoption of a new ‘three-tiered social mobilisation’ strategy. Additionally, as highlighted above (p. 133), RDO has expanded to quite a large number of districts in Pakistan. To constantly demonstrate competence, it might also have appeared imperative to adopt those practices, which were considered ‘professional’.

It always remained a challenge as to what would be the role of RDO and the Village Organisations (VOs) in the long run. Since RDO was a ‘support organisation’, it
could not be expected to work permanently with the VOs. Secondly, its mandate was to establish VOs in such a way that they would pro-actively work long after RDO had exited. To solve the dilemma, the foundational document offered three provisional alternatives

... for formalising and federating VOs: [1] As cooperatives, preferably under revised legislation; [2] as owners of one or more joint stock companies set up by RDO and the VOs; or, [3] As the primary tier of local government, if the government and RDO can work out the appropriate model (RDO, n.d.: 55-6).

The notion of ‘federation’ of VOs/COs appeared attractive as Mr. Shoaib, the first General Manager (GM) of AKRSP, also reflected on it in his writings (see Khan, 1988; 1992). RDO experimented with the idea of forming District Development Societies (DDS) in which, according to Mr. Dardmand (age: 40s), ‘geographically contiguous Village Organisations (VOs) were clustered at the district level’. However, the innovation could not work as, according to the same interviewee, ‘nobody was clear enough to set operating procedures [for their functioning at trans-village level]’. Ultimately, the ‘solution’ for the problem of ‘safely’ exiting and helping VOs ‘graduate’ to higher-level bodies came via the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN).

It has been stated above (p. 137) that RSPN is the umbrella organisation whose membership comprise of all those organisations, which follow the RSP approach. The need for the establishment of RSPN was felt when a number of ‘Rural Support Programmes (RSPs)’ were formed during the 1990s. At RSPN, the ‘solution’ for putting VOs on a sustainable platform of ‘institutional development’ came from the United Nation’s South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (UN-SAPAP)*, which ran between 1994 and 2005 in a number of countries, including the Indian state of Andra Pradesh. At Andra Pradesh, in a project called ‘Velugu’, women self-help
groups had been federated at district level (Aiyar et al., 2007). In addition to this, in order to tackle the problem of capacity development, Velugu selected and trained members from the self-help groups. Members thus selected and trained were called community resource persons (CRPs) to ‘... function as para-professionals in the village, delivering community services such as basic health care, veterinary services, and childcare’ (Aiyar et al., 2007: 113). Mr. Shoaib, who chaired RSPN and worked as advisor for the UN-SAPAP, observed this innovation and shared the idea with the RSPN-member organisations. The innovation thus diffused into the member organisations of RSPN wherein it was adopted as ‘three-tiered social mobilisation’. According to the Community Specialist, Mr. Ramzan (age: 30s),

As we have a network [RSPN] so we adopted this. Once a good idea springs it can be planted anywhere through RSPN network. Compulsory thing for us is to follow three-tiered [social] mobilisation strategy.

In the original strategy of the RSP approach, neighbourhood level groups formed in a village were all referred to as VOs (RDO, n.d.: 18-23). After the introduction of the three-tiered social mobilisation, the process changed as follows.

Firstly, organisations formed at neighbourhood/street level in villages are referred to as Community Organisations (COs). Each CO, on average, comprises 25 members. Once a considerable number of COs has been formed in geographically contiguous villages, they are federated into a Village Organisation (VO). When a number of VOs have been formed, they are federated into a Local Support Organisation (LSO). This three-tiered social mobilisation can be understood better in terms of pyramidal structure in juxtaposition to the current local government set up.

A Union Council (UC) is the bottom tier in the three-tier local government structure of Pakistan. Administratively, it is an area with an average population of 25000
people scattered in a few villages (Mezzera et al., 2010: 14). The adult population of all the constituent villages elect their representatives for the Union Council government, who in turn elect leadership for the upper two tiers of Tehsil Council and District Council. Union Council, which is the lowest unit in the administrative structure of local government, is the top-most administrative unit in RDO’s three-tiered Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach for social mobilisation. That is, COs are formed at street/neighbourhood-level, which are federated into Village Organisations (VOs) and then the VOs in a given Union Council are federated into Local Support Organisations (Figures 5.3, p. 151). Along with this, RDO has also introduced a new role set up for villagers called ‘Community Resource Person (CRP)’. The designation is given to an individual from the community for his/her active participation and cooperation in RDO’s interventions. The job of CRP is to help the Social Organiser (SO) in managing community level tasks of, for example, identification and organisation of community members for which s/he is paid Pakistani Rupees (PKR.) 15,000 (≈ £100) a month. It should be noted that, despite being paid, s/he is considered a community member and is not formally on the payroll of RDO.

In the newly adopted approach, a Social Organiser receives help from Community Resource Persons (CRPs). Moreover, the agenda of RSP approach has evolved so that now an SO organises community members with the support of CRPs, initially at neighbourhood level and then they are graduated to Village Organisations and ultimately at the Union Council level in the form of LSOs. The innovation to engage active members from communities as ‘helping hands’ in organising community members along with the idea of connecting apparently isolated villagers into a trans-Union Council body in the form of Local Support Organisation (LSO) appears potentially advantageous for grassroots change and empowerment. Moreover, the
approach is also potentially beneficial to allow community members to work on issues of wider concern rather than merely focusing on neighbourhood issues. However, it appears uncertain that the three-tiered social mobilisation really works that well to the advantage of community members as has been discussed so far.

Thus, in terms of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983; 1991) theory, RDO's uncertainty about appropriate way to 'exit' communities and the challenge to develop sustainably functioning organisations at the grassroots created an organisational 'need' for the adoption of the new model. This was in part out of 'mimetic' pressures as the organisation was not clear about its role and the role of the communities, and in part out of a 'normative' isomorphic process to demonstrate 'professionalism'.

However, what appear as 'mimetic' and 'normative' isomorphic processes are also interpretable in terms of path-dependence arguments as 'coordination effect', 'adaptive expectations' and 'learning effect' (Arthur, 1994; Pierson, 2000). 'Coordination effects' means that once an organisation adopts certain procedures or rules the chances for its continuity increases because existing rules/procedures help in determining behaviour or performance in advance. Hence, ‘... it becomes more attractive to adopt these rules the more other individuals follow these very same rules’ (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011: 324). Adaptive expectations mean that organisations and its members adopt things by projecting about other organisations. Organisation might do this because they always want to be in the lead or 'on the winner's side' (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011: 325). Thus procedures may be adopted and followed for longer periods of time even if they are not optimum in the long run. Learning effect means that innovations are most often introduced in the same set of practices (Pierson, 2000). This is because

... human beings form expectations around a given set of rules/institutions. ... many would prefer simply to continue with the
rules they currently have – even if they are not necessarily optimal. … [Moreover,] because institutions affect behaviour, over time they can also shape preferences. Human beings may come to prefer a given institutional arrangements because it is what they are used to (Steinmo, 2008: 129).

Keeping this in mind, it appears that RDO upgraded to the ‘three-tiered’ strategy because it had been already active in social mobilisation since its inception in the 1990s. Having worked for about two decades on social mobilisation, the organisation had developed a range of organisational processes, procedures and roles. Since the new approach already fitted well with existing organisational structures and skills of the staff members, it was therefore adopted. Additionally, RDO might also have adopted the new model out of ‘opportunistic’ or ‘commercial’ interests to access more funding; to appease prospective donors, it might have adopted the three-tiered social mobilisation strategy. Or simply, RDO might have adopted the innovation because it wanted to be in the league of successful organisation irrespective of the question whether it would work or not. To assess the validity of these propositions, I present the operational aspects of its approach in the following section.
Figure 5.3: Pakistan’s Local Government Structure Versus the Three-tiered Social Mobilisation

A Snapshot of the three tiers in the Local Government of Pakistan

Tier 1: Community Organisation (CO)

Tier 2: Village Organisation (VO)

Tier 3: Local Support Organisation (LSO)

The Three Tiers in RDO’s Social Mobilisation

District Administration

Tehsil Administration

Union Council ≈ 25,000 population

Tier 1: Community Organisation (CO)

Tier 2: Village Organisation (VO)

Tier 3: Local Support Organisation (LSO)
5.4 Dilemmas in the Practice of the RSP Approach

This section presents critical issues relevant to the adoption and practical implementation of RDO’s social mobilisation strategy. The analysis proceeds primarily in the form of a historical narrative. It is being done so to explicate the above-mentioned claims of the staff members about RDO’s distinctiveness from other NGOs. Secondly, placing the practice of social mobilisation strategy historically would also assist in determining whether it was optimal in achieving organisational goals or not. Moreover, if the innovation was sub-optimal, then I will also briefly highlight its implications for the organisational goals and practices.

As stated above, funding for the feasibility study about RDO’s establishment was granted by the USAID. Moreover, USAID had also promised ‘seed money’ for its establishment. However, a crisis of resource-scarcity for NGOs, including RDO, began when USA suddenly cut off development assistance because the U.S. president ‘… could not certify that Pakistan had no nuclear weapons programme, and withdrawal of aid was required by the Pressler Amendment to US foreign aid legislation’ (Sims, 1997: 216). In late 1994, the situation was considerably alleviated when the US Vice President Al Gore promised Pakistan [US]$200 million in aid for social development programmes (Sims, 1997: 216). RDO survived the shock of USAID’s withdrawal when the government came to its rescue. This occurred because

RDO was a government baby. So, when donor money did not come, the government gave 2, 3 projects to help it working.

--- Mr. Jumma (age: 40s), Business Coordinator

The rescue came with a contingency, though. The current and ex-government bureaucrats had established RDO, and thus its Board of Directors (BoD) was
designed to accommodate senior bureaucrats of the government. RDO worked smoothly to function according to its mandate, i.e., empowering the rural poor to organise, giving them a one-off grant for productive physical infrastructure, educating them to save working capital for individual and collective future benefits of their villages and begin income-generating enterprises with the help of RDO's service of credit-delivery. However, this approach to change turned out rather detrimental as RDO's dealing with the community unconsciously socialised them to perceive government as ineffective and inefficient in service-delivery. I documented this implication of RDO's dealing with the community during the fieldwork. For instance, in one of the FGDs, Mr. Behzad, an aged farmer, said:

Our government is doing nothing for common people. It is good that USA [referring to a USAID-funded project] is providing aid to Pakistan. The Pakistani government does not pay unemployment bonus to unemployed people like other countries do. People should not talk against USA.

Seconding this, Mr. Taqweem (age: 30s), a Community Resource Person (CRP), remarked:

NGOs like RDO, RAHA* or ASF** directly go the community and solve their problems. Government first contacts us through local influential leaders rather than community. I can call Maahr**, if I have some problem, for example, disease on tomato crop. He prescribes some pesticides for that disease. He also comes to visit my field upon my request if that pesticide does not work. Government agriculture officers would never come to my field. They would say they are busy in their duties.

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21 The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) Programme is ‘a five-year joint initiative launched in 2009 between the Government of Pakistan (GoP), represented by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, a consortium of UN agencies, a number of Government organisations and non-governmental organisations. It is an integral part of the Government’s Afghan Refugees Strategy beyond July 2013 and a key component of the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (2012-2014) (UNHCR, 2013: n.p.). ASF, which stands for Agribusiness Support Fund is a national NGO (ASF, 2009). Both were working in the interviewees’ village at the time of the fieldwork.

22 A CRP of RDO.
Such perceptions of community members place RDO oddly with its stipulated approach to social change: It was explicitly designed to supplement and complement government services through organising poor men and women in ‘demand-making’ institutions at grassroots level. As such, the above-mentioned opinions of Behzad and Taqweem, while reflecting on personalised and patronage-based service-delivery of politicians and bureaucracy, also point towards the oddity of the situation in which RDO’s relationship with communities have evolved. It is also pertinent to point out that community members’ appreciation of RDO and correspondingly explicit criticism of government (politicians and bureaucracy) germinate from their receipt of practical, tangible interventions, such as building of physical infrastructure and the provision of agricultural items. This point will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. For now, I will turn to the dilemmas RDO faced arising out of its ‘good’ performance.

The phenomenon of people’s appreciation of RDO and undermining of government departments arose quite early in the history of RDO. When I referred to the above-narrated views of community members and asked Mr. Sarmad whether RDO was undermining state institutions, he reflected on his own experiences thus.

You see when this outreach was being worked upon, social organiser was such a person… He was at the periphery level, at the lower end of the organisational hierarchy. During his interaction with the community some messages would get passed – not [emphasis original] intentionally, but unintentionally – that would create the impression that the government was not doing it but we [RDO] were doing the works. But attempt was made to correct this [weakness].

--- Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s), ex-Project Coordinator

According to Mr. Sarmad, in the mid-1990s RDO was running a government-funded project. When the government’s monitoring team visited the field, they found people extolling RDO for its efforts for organising them and providing them with income-
generating opportunities, but the government of KP was never mentioned. When the monitoring officers indignantly identified this, RDO took measures to imprint project-related brochures and pamphlets with the government’s logo and sensitised Social Organisers not to refer to government’s inadequacies while pitching RDO’s agenda. Nevertheless, it seems to have been very difficult for field-staff, particularly, Social Organisers to refrain from capitalising on the rhetoric of government’s inadequacy as a point for bringing community members under RDO’s umbrella. Note for instance, the contradiction in the reflections of an ex-Agricultural Officer, Mr. Faraan (age: 40s), regarding his field experience.

other organisations thought RDO was like [a] state within a state. A good social organiser would discuss this thing in the very first meeting that he just wanted to bridge the gap between the government and the community. We made this a part of our training. We would also tell the community that government departments can’t reach there because they had limited resources [emphasis added].

It is interesting to note that, while the field staff attempted to ‘bridge the gap between the government and the community’, they told them about government’s inadequacies. Moreover, the field-staff did this despite being trained to refrain from sending such messages to the community. This was one of the reasons that being ‘government’s baby’ and being largely funded by it, the provincial government tried to impose its terms on RDO towards the close of 1990s.

In a nutshell, RDO like most donor-dependent NGOs have a central dilemma. Whether it is funded by the government or by some international (governmental or non-governmental) donor, the effects of its development.partnerships with the communities may have the negative (political) effects of developing anti-state sentiments among the people. This is a built-in contradiction in the agenda of those NGOs, including RDO, which aim to organise people so that they can work together for their development in the absence of effective local government. As such, a
development NGO’s services to people and their (indirect) political conscientisation is a welcome measure. However, firstly members of community organisations do not criticise state agencies on the basis of some ideological grounds, but they merely criticise the government and extol RDO because it provides them with tangible benefits.

In addition to this sub-optimality, the larger NGO sector in Pakistan has considerably developed. However, as I alluded to above, staff-members considered RDO as distinctively different from ‘NGOs’. To highlight the importance of this identity, I will refer again to Ms. Aruj’s (age: 50s) claim:

> at the time when Akhtar Hameed Khan was experimenting and it was purely an experiment in Comilla. There were, I would say, probably no NGO at all.

Staff-members’ allusion to RDO being somehow distinctively different from ‘NGOs’ in the common sense of the term emanates from the recent surge in NGOs in Pakistan, almost all of which claim to be ‘participatory’ but are mostly allegedly engaged in fraudulent activities. This aspect of NGOs’ work in Pakistan has been quite well documented by Bano (2008a; 2008b). After interviewing the management and field-staff of foreign-aid dependent NGOs as well as local (Pakistani) charity based organisations, she found that the leadership of the local charity-based organisations detested to be called ‘NGOs’ as they considered NGOs to be merely concerned with making money. In fact, even her interviewees from NGOs confirmed that public perception of them was extremely negative precisely because some actors in the sector were only after money. As noted in Chapter 4 (p. 106-7), there might have been a surge in the number of NGOs as a consequence of the massive earthquake in 2005, the crises of internally displaced people (IDPs) in 2008 and massive flood in 2010. The availability of
substantial funding from USAID, UK-DFID and other international donors seems to have contributed to proliferation of NGOs. This is evident from the following statement made by the Team Leader, Mr. Dardmand (age: 40s)

Many NGOs emerge these days. They tell donors that hand-pump [for water supply] costs Rs. 200,000 to 500,000 [≈ £1300 to ≈ £3300] and donors provide them because they [the donors] do not know the actual price. RDO handle this thing through community. Ajeem’s organisation and two, three other organisations were also made by RDO. There is another organisation ‘Salam’, which we made. Similarly, ‘Mehrban’ NGO was also established by RDO. These organisations are very developed now.

These organisations were originally community-based organisations, which, with the passage of time and with the help of the field-staff, ‘matured’ to become independently registered NGOs. As such, the staff-members’ claim that RDO is not an ‘ordinary’ NGO holds ground. We can take these as instances of ‘positive’ mimetic and normative isomorphic processes.

However, the management and administration of its three-tiered social mobilisation strategy also appears to be suffering from coordination effects and adaptive expectations. Apparently, RDO’s three-tiered social mobilisation definitely constitutes evidence regarding its incremental approach to social change but the implementation of the approach is too speedy to be considered as effective. It should be remembered that, since its establishment, RDO has expanded its operations to 25 districts of Pakistan. It adopted the three-tiered social mobilisation strategy in 2008 and by 2015 (RDO, 2015a: 6) it organised 809,180 households in 34,366 organisations. Some of these organisations have been federated into 2,522 village organisations and 123 Local Support Organisations (LSOs). Such figures beg the question as to how the ‘incremental’ process of community-driven social

23 A Community Resource Person (CRP) in one of RDO’s project area.
change has achieved so much in about 8 years. According to the opinion of ex-NRM Officer, Mr. Imtihaan (age: 40s):

Don’t take these COs, VOs, LSOs as RDO’s organisations. Instead take them as people’s organisation. Government should take this as an entry point for development.

That is, although RDO helps community members to form these organisations, the principal purpose (in theory) is to sensitise community members through this process so that they will ask for guidance to graduate to higher level organisation from COs to VOs and ultimately to the formation of LSOs. In essence, RDO’s job is to rigorously apply the principles of social mobilisation through its continuous dialogues with communities. In the words of an ex-Agricultural Officer, Mr. Faraan (age: 40s)

Social Mobilisation is a very organic process. It involves dialogues, capacity building and social interaction but it become mechanical due to time bound projects. We [RDO] have expanded so much and when there is expansion there will be project approach. We should not help a community in forming LSOs. LSO would form by itself if our mobilisation is strong.

It is also relevant to recall that the dialogue process with community members, which has been described above (p. 141-45) would take months before people could be organised into a CO. In this regard, Mr. Matlab (age: 30s), a Project Consultant in the organisation, said, ‘I won’t name him but a senior ex-employee told us in the induction training that it would take about 6 months to form a community organisation’. Keeping this in view, the task of federating a number of COs in a Village Organisation (VO) and subsequently at the level of Union Council in a Local Support Organisation (LSO) should, in turn, take more time. Yet, the above statement and the statistics regarding the number of COs suggest that the practice of RSP approach has gradually taken on a mechanical form, which, as
stated above, can be interpreted in terms of coordination effects and adaptive expectations.

In the post 9/11 contexts, a large number of donors have committed massive aid to Pakistan, 30% of which is channelled through NGOs (Bano, 2012: xi). Since most NGOs have metaphorically resorted to ‘quick fix solutions’ to tackle the problem of rural poverty, it appears that RDO-like organisations are also under pressure to demonstrate ‘success’. In terms of path dependence literature, it can be interpreted that RDO has adopted ‘innovative’ approach for organising rural poor out of the ‘adaptive expectations’. Similarly, in addition to this, as most NGOs are quickly disbursing aid in the form of tangible items to the communities, RDO’s field-staff are also resorting to tactics of quickly organising men and women in COs, VOs and LSOs.

It has been long since we left social mobilisation. Mobilisation has come down to calling CRPs and activists to collect CNIC [Computerised National Identity Card] copies from people to make COs, distribute given inputs and services and then forget about it.

--- Mr. Naqvy (age: 30s), Funds Manager

In the currently prevailing aid regime in Pakistan, most NGOs use the jargon of participatory development but, in practice, they only marginally follow it. Consequently, it seems that RDO too has resorted to similar tactics. However, the question arises as to whether RDO is only speedily forming organisations of poor men and women, or are its other interventions, e.g., in agriculture, micro-credit and enterprise development, also suffering from the same problem? These issues are addressed in the following two data chapters.
5.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the politico-economic context of the emergence of RDO and the bases, assumptions and operational procedure of its developmental approach. The chapter also identified the critical factors that have been negatively impinging on RDO’s goals and activities. The chapter demonstrated that, like most NGOs in Pakistan and elsewhere in developing countries, donors’ preference to work with NGOs and ready availability of aid was a major reason for the establishment and growth of RDO. Yet the chapter also identified the specific circumstances and factors that contributed to its establishment: the provincial government’s readiness to establish an organisation to fill in the vacuum created by an inadequate local government structure, the inspiring success of AKRSP and availability of technical and material resources. The chapter also briefly narrated the evolution of RSP approach. It demonstrated that the rural cooperatives experiment at Comilla (East Pakistan) in 1959 was the earliest precursor to the evolution of RSP model in Pakistan. Relatedly, the chapter also highlighted the fact that the developmental assumptions of the model are traceable to utopian socialist ideas of the early 19th century and English and German cooperatives experiments in the latter half of the 19th century.

The chapter also presented the process of practical implementation of RSP approach in RDO along with the recent innovation of three-tiered social mobilisation. Relying primarily on the narratives of experienced staff-members, a detailed step-by-step description of implementation of its developmental model was provided. The chapter also presented its membership of Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN). It was argued that RDO’s membership of RSPN is a source of ‘positive’ mimetic and normative isomorphic processes, which was an indicator of its capacity to adapt based on learning effective ideas and thus evolve as a learning
organisation. However, along with the presentation of the ‘positive’ changes, RDO was also found to be working in an aid-regime where the abundant provision of grants and aid has contributed to a plethora of NGOs, thus making it difficult for the case study organisation to effectively implement its three-tiered social mobilisation approach in sustainable ways. To strengthen the argument, recent figures about RDO’s achievements regarding the formation of COs, VOs, and LSOs were presented to highlight that the original slow process of organising communities is being replaced by a hasty process of CO-formation. It then appears that RDO’s efforts for social change are taking on a path-dependent process out of coordination effects and adaptive expectations in the larger NGO environment. However, to substantiate this argument rigorously, we need to look into the practice of social mobilisation in detail as well as other organisational innovations and practices of RDO for empowerment of the rural masses and poverty alleviation. These aspects of RDO are analysed in detail in the following two chapters.
Chapter 6 – Fertilisers and Bombs: Modernisation of Agricultural Practices and Processes

6.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the politico-economic context of the emergence of RDO and explained in detail the origins, underlying assumptions and operational strategy of its approach to grassroots change and development. It has been demonstrated that, while following the RSP approach, RDO has organised thousands of people in community organisations, yet over the years, especially in the post 9/11 aid-regime, it appeared to be rather opportunistic in its approach. As such, it looks to be more of an instrumental/neoliberal organisation than an organisation for political/radical change (Edwards, 2011; Heyse, 2006) in the rural areas. To determine the validity of this claim, the present chapter presents a detailed analysis of an agricultural project, which RDO implemented between September 2012 and May 2014. The analysis presented in this chapter aims to address the following research question:

*What challenges have intra-community relationships, donors and politico-economic environment presented for RDO’s vision and practice of its approach to change?*

The analysis draws on fieldwork data about ‘The Agridevelopment Project (TAP)’, which RDO ran in collaboration with the Agribusiness Support Fund (ASF), an NGO, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the donor. The first section of the chapter begins with introducing the roles of the USAID and the ASF, the two collaborators in the project, in whose partnership the project was implemented. It also briefly refers to previous projects that were precursors to TAP.
In this regard, the implementation strategies of the previous projects are briefly highlighted to demonstrate their differences from TAP’s implementation strategy. Thereafter, the implementation strategy of The Agridevelopment Project is presented. After these descriptive aspects, the chapter engages critically with the notion of training farmers in (1) structure farming for cultivating (2) GMOs-based cash crops and (3) the development of market-based value chain development strategies in agriculture, which were the basic interventions in the project. Examples from Pakistan’s previous experiences in agricultural modernisation are presented to critically assess the implications of commercial farming techniques for value chain and the use of GMOs. Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 discuss the practical implementation of the project, especially problems encountered by the farmers and RDO-staff in implementing the project. Observational data and interviews from staff-members and farmers are presented to highlight the achievements as well as the problems experienced in the implementation of the project. The final section (6.3) presents the dilemmas and challenges, which farmers and RDO staff faced during the implementation process. I also highlight and explain features of the project that farmers appreciated as well as their reservations and concerns. Alongside this, the section also presents the influence of donors on RDO’s operations and farmers’ expectations. In this regard, I particularly focus on presenting the dealings of field-staff with community members and donors to make the project a ‘success’. Furthermore, the process of farmers’ and field-staffs’ mutual support to each other to achieve a ‘smooth implementation’ of the project, are also highlighted. Finally, the chapter holistically identifies challenges that RDO faced while dealing with its implementation partners and with community members.
6.1 The Agridevelopment Project (TAP): Background and Intervention Strategy

The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) was a three-year project (October 2012 – September 2015) awarded to RDO in partnership with the Agribusiness Support Fund (ASF). ASF is a non-profit company established by the Pakistan’s Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MINFAL) to provide ‘… farmers, farmer groups, and entrepreneurs with demand-driven technical and managerial services on a matching grant basis to improve their productivity, competitiveness and creditworthiness to access financing for their enterprises’ (ASF, 2009: n.p.). It carries out its stipulated work in partnership with community-based NGOs such as RDO. Prior to the commencement of the current project, RDO and ASF had jointly completed three projects with funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The projects ran during October 2007 – October 2008, April 2009 – February 2010 and March 2010 – March 2011, in which RDO organised 100 Farmer Enterprise Groups (FEGs), 40 FEGs, and 200 FEGs respectively. In those projects, RDO had also engaged a corporate firm ‘Empowerment through Creative Integration (ECI)’ to train FEG-members on entrepreneurial farming and value chain in agriculture. The central component in the project was the provision of grants to farmers. The FEG members would calculate the expenses they expected to incur in farming and submitted those for approval to the ASF. The ASF transferred the grant to the bank account of each FEG. The FEG leadership (General Secretary and President), in its capacity as the custodians of the bank account, distributed the grant among the members. However, firstly, from the farmers’ perspective, the money did not always reach the bank accounts of FEGs right at the time when they needed it to buy agricultural inputs. Mr. Hamaan (age: 30s), an FEG member, complained that ‘there was not a proper way for that. Like we would complete our trainings and then we
would prepare proposals. Then, it was their will, whether they gave us the money after 10 days or a year’. Secondly, according to the field-staff, some of the FEG leaders misappropriated co-members’ money. Thirdly, it was doubted that the farmers were investing the money in agriculture. Some of them were observed to have spent it on non-agricultural goods and services. Mr. Naqvy (age: 30s), the Funds Manager in RDO, reflected that ‘3 out of 10 of the FEG-members or leaders would mismanage the money’.

In TAP, the intervention strategy was modified to tackle the above problems. According to the new strategy, the FEGs were supposed to draft matching-grant proposals. RDO was supposed to process the proposal onwards to the ASF and the USAID for approval. TAP was implemented in the three districts of Hall, Fall, and Gall with the following objectives:

1. To increase agriculture efficiency and productivity [of farmers] through adoption of new farming techniques and technological innovation among targeted beneficiaries [i.e., poor farmers].
2. To strengthen their [sic] capacity in horticulture and livestock value chains to increase sales to domestic and foreign markets.
3. To strengthen the capacity of smallholders and farmer enterprises to operate autonomously and effectively (RDO, 2012: 3).

The terms like (1) new farming techniques, (2) technological innovation and particularly (3) value chain mentioned in the above objectives deserve explanation. The meaning of the first two concepts would become clear from the intervention strategy described below. The overarching concept of ‘value chain’ and its implications will follow separately, as it deserves detailed treatment.

Figure 6.1 below (p. 167) illustrates a seven-stage process for achieving the objectives of FEG-formation, regarding which the proposal outlined the following steps. Following its Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach, RDO would begin conducting a series of dialogues with community members in the selected villages
of the target districts. The interested and deserving farmers would be given ‘…in-depth and detailed orientation about the project through focus groups discussions’ (RDO, 2012: 16) to orient them to see farming as an enterprise. Then, interested farmers with households in geographic proximity would be organised into Farmer Enterprise Groups (FEGs), each comprising of 15 members, including a General Secretary (GS) and a President. Then FEGs would sign terms of partnership (ToP) with RDO to become a registered body of farmers with the organisation. FEGs would also open bank accounts, which they were supposed to use for collective savings. Thereafter, FEGs would be delivered 4-day Enterprise Development Training (EDT) in ‘… business, strengthening of the FEG, importance of value chain analysis, finding gaps and identifying appropriate interventions for development of their proposed activity. The training will also help the FEG in the concepts of grant proposals’ (RDO, 2012: 18). Then, with the help of RDO, each FEG would design and submit matching grant proposals to the USAID. Once approved, the FEG members would be provided with agricultural inputs on the basis of 50% cost-sharing and risk-sharing. To administer the project, a Project Support Unit (PSU) was established. It had 4 members of staff and 6 Community Resource Persons (CRPs), who worked under the guidance of the RDO’s headquarters (RDO, 2012: 13-18). The proposal does not contain the details of the types of modern agriculture practices proposed for the FEGs, the list of agriculture items farmers were supposed to receive, the monitory value of the items and the frequency with which the items were planned to be provided to the farmers during the three years (October 2012 to September 2015). Similarly, without providing a strategy or timeline for the introduction of the value chain, the proposal just vaguely states that ‘[i]t is very important for the FEGs to identify players in their value chains; however, it may not be easy’ (RDO, 2012: 18). These and other operational aspects of the project were clarified during the fieldwork, the details of which follow below.
Figure 6.1: Formation Process of Farmer Enterprise Groups (FEGs)

1. Orientation to COs to Identify Farmers Group
2. Formation of Farmer Enterprise Groups
3. Establishment of Farmer Enterprise Groups
4. Establishment of Backward-Forward Linkages
5. FEGs Gap Assessment
6. Submission of Matching Grant Proposal to ASF
7. Implementation Support

Source: RDO (2012: 18)
According to the proposed methodology, farmers interested in becoming members of Farmer Enterprise Groups (FEG) were required to allocate 10 marla ($\approx 272.25$ square feet) of cultivable land. Farmers could allocate a piece of land that they owned, had leased or held as shared-cultivators. This was required to introduce farmers to modern farming techniques, called ‘structure farming’. Structure farming is usually practiced in cash crops, especially vegetables. Once the vegetables reach certain maturity, bamboos and/or other wood bars are mounted at equal distances from each other in the farm. Wood bars are connected with each other through a metal wire. Alongside the metal wire, a nylon/cotton thread is interlaced with it so that it has the appearance of a net-like form, as shown in Figure 6.2 (p. 170). The innovation was considered to extend the production period of plants. Farmers were supposed to build these for growing ‘off-season’ vegetables. That is, for producing cash crops at the time when they were virtually unavailable in the market and thus could earn more profit.

For their participation in the project and allocation of 10 marla ($\approx 272.25$ square feet) farm, each FEG with a fixed membership of 15 farmers was provided agriculture goods worth Pakistani Rupees (PKR.) 450,000 to 500,000 ($\approx \pounds 3,000$ to 3,300). Each FEG member received agriculture inputs equivalent to PKR. 30,000 - 35,000 ($\approx \pounds 200 – 233$). FEGs were supposed to receive agriculture goods worth this amount per annum between October 2012 and September 2015. Each FEG was supposed to receive (1) bamboo sticks for mounting them to build structure farm, (2) Genetically Modified (GM)$^{24}$ seeds, (3) steel-wire for connecting the bamboo sticks, (4) nylon thread to design the net, and (5) polythene bags for packing the harvest. In return, farmers’ labour-hours, water-management, arranging for fertilisers,

$^{24}$ The farmers and members of staff referred to them as ‘hybrids’. However, the term GM/GMO is retained throughout the chapter to maintain consistency with the published literature.
pesticides and other goods and services as well as the allocation of 10 *marla* (≈ 272.28 square feet) land and administering other goods and services for the farms were taken as their 50% contribution to the project. FEGs also received training on skill-enhancement. This training aimed at improving farmers’ theoretical knowledge about pest-management and fertiliser-application and practical skills in farm structure-designing. Additionally, they were also supposed to receive training on Enterprise Development. Once these were delivered to the farmers, they were then supposed to begin working on value chain, which has been described in Figure 6.1 (p. 167) as ‘backward-forward linkages’.

Farmers were supposed to learn about value chains and develop linkages with various agents through the ‘Business Development Service Providers’ (BDSP), which had been formed in the target areas. A BDSP is equivalent to what has been already described in Chapter 5 (p. 145-50) as Village Organisation (VO). The difference, however, is that a VO is a general-purpose community development organisation, but a BDSP is a supra-village organisation that is especially meant for enterprise-development services to members of the constituent FEGs.

Thus far, a descriptive account of the objectives and organisational strategy for the implementation of TAP has been presented. Before analysing the implementation of the project and the intervening factors in its operations, it appears appropriate to now explain the central concept of ‘value chain’ along with its ideological import and implications for farming in countries like Pakistan.
6.2 The concept and Practice of ‘value chain’: Explanation and Implications

Michael Porter (1985) introduced the concept of value chain to analyse corporate firms and to stress ‘the importance of looking at the discrete activities a firm performs and how they interact to deliver value to the marketplace as a source of competitive advantage’ (Presutti and Mawhinney, 2013: 139). The concept diffused into the development sector towards the end of 1990s, but it especially gained currency after its endorsement by the World Bank in its 2008 report on Agriculture for Development (McMichael and Schneider, 2011). The report mentions it while highlighting the following four objectives for the modernisation of agriculture in developing countries:

1. Improve access to markets and establish efficient value chains …
2. Enhance smallholder competitiveness and facilitate market entry…

To achieve these objectives, the report stresses the importance of farmers’ organisations for their potential to facilitate ‘economies of scale – for example, in input supply, extension, marketing and managing common property resources, such as watersheds and irrigation system’ and NGOs’ competence in delivering services, ‘especially at the local government and community levels’ (World Bank, 2008: 248). In the context of The Agridevelopment Project (TAP), it was explained to me in the following terms.

It means how world is affected by different chains? Bitter gourd is a value chain when you follow standard practices from sowing till packing and marketing.

--- Mr. Matlab (age: 30s), Project Consultant

To paraphrase, the concept means helping farmers learn and understand various stakeholders engaged in the entire loop of an agriculture commodity from production, distribution to consumption. These could include the material (fertiliser, pesticides etc.) providers, the producers, retailers, the demands and approaches of retailers and wholesalers (both domestic and international) of agriculture products. Since farmers were engaged in growing off-season vegetables using structure farming, the idea of ‘value chain’ could potentially help them in exploring and expanding the market niche for their high rate of production.

In Pakistan, the introduction of the innovative approach appears a welcome measure as 22% of its population have shortage of food (FAO, 2014). A major reason for food insecurity is farmers’ low productivity. Factors involved in farmers’ low productivity include poverty, inadequate knowledge about improved farm
practices and technologies, government’s neglect of agriculture including limited investment in research and extension services (Khan and Shah, 2011: 508). The government of Pakistan has been taking measures to support farmers in securing moderate income by fixing the price of wheat and rice and by providing Urea subsidy (Bashir and Schilizzi, 2015: 1072). However, these measures have not been effective in helping farmers overcome poverty and the problem of low crop yield. For example, between 1990-91 and 2008, the increase in support of the price of wheat has been 458% against an increase of 51.7% in wheat production (Ahmad, 2009: 87).

In such a scenario, projects such as TAP appear timely and innovative interventions, which aim at improving farmers’ knowledge and practices regarding agriculture. However, the emphasis on value chain development appears to be driven by neoliberal aims for ‘commercialisation’ of agriculture. Moreover, it can also have potentially negative economic and ecological implications. Both these aspects of the ‘innovation’ are elaborated upon in the following section.

6.2.1 The Training (and socialisation) of Farmers

As mentioned above, farmers were supposed to receive (1) enterprise development training (EDT) and (2) agricultural skill development training. EDT was conducted soon after the formation of the FEGs when the project began in October 2012. When I visited the FEGs in November 2013 – December 2013, I saw them participating in 2-days training on agricultural skill enhancement. On day one, farmers attended a lecture about modern techniques in pest-management and the application of fertilisers. On day two, FEG-members received hands-on practical training in designing structure-farm. Such ‘capacity development’ initiatives for value chain development and entrepreneurial agriculture appear as neutral and ‘technical’
interventions but in reality they have ideological undercurrents. To locate their ideological significance, I will refer to the World Bank (2008) report, according to which:

> [t]he world of agriculture has changed dramatically since the 1982 *World Development Report* on agriculture. Dynamic new markets, far-reaching technological and institutional innovations, and new roles for the state, the private sector, and civil society all characterise the new context for agriculture. The emerging new agriculture is led by private entrepreneurs in extensive value chains linking producers to consumers and including many entrepreneurial smallholders supported by their organisations (World Bank, 2008: 8).

The positing of value chain in ‘new agriculture’ is, in essence, a neoliberal project for ‘commercialisation’ of agriculture. As one of the leading institutions of neoliberalism, the World Bank’s emphasis on ‘dynamic new markets’ for farmers and value chain and competitiveness means that other multilateral and bilateral agencies might be more or less readily buying into the discourse. Since civil society is often synonymously used for NGOs (Edwards, 2008a), the discursive pitching of agriculture as untapped reservoir of profits and highlighting NGOs, among others, as potentially important players in this regard is creating institutional ground, which along with the delivery of aid-based agricultural material is speedily diffusing a commercial approach among the farmers.

It is appropriate to mention that TAP was not funded by the World Bank but by the USAID. However, bilateral aid agencies such as the USAID, DFID etc. and multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and the UN agencies, share their version of ‘development’ and somehow impose it on the governments and NGOs in developing countries. For instance, according to Ebrahim (2003) when the notion of sustainable development became popular towards the end of 1987, the two nationally renowned NGOs in India, AKRSP and Sadguru, modified their organisational mission and objectives in the light of the new agenda. Thus, these
organisations were able to demonstrate to potential donors that they were competent and learning-oriented.

It is also pertinent to mention that the neoliberal project for commercialisation of agriculture is apparently different in terms of creating ‘a regime based on the commodification of food provisioning’ (McMichael, 2013a: 7), but the aid-dependent developing countries are almost as much exposed to its imposition from above as they were in the Cold War politics of aid. This is at least valid in the context of Pakistan.

Governmental authorities in Pakistan have often addressed the poor productivity of agriculture by maintaining food importation policies, the most relevant example of which is Pakistan’s importation of wheat grains from the U.S under the ‘PL-480 concessional price programme’. Pakistan signed the deal with the US government in 1954 under the terms of which it received wheat grains on concessional terms. The programme was originally designed ‘… to reduce U.S. grain surpluses and expand export markets as well as to aid foreign countries’ (Vellianitis-Fidas and Manfredi, 1977: iv). In the 1950s contexts of the Cold War politics and Pakistan’s geostrategic importance, the US offered ‘aid' to Pakistan, which the government readily accepted to overcome food shortages. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 18-20), 1950s was the era of state-led ‘modernisation’ in developing countries. Since the planners were interested in industrialisation, they did not look into the long-term effects of accepting grains from the US as a viable policy for overcoming food shortage, as such programmes contributed to the underdevelopment of and underinvestment in agriculture in developing countries (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). That is, … for their own reasons and with encouragement from international agencies, [developing countries] generally adopted cheap food policies as part of industrialisation programmes, and welcomed US wheat when it came as foreign aid. Even when it didn't, the downward
pressure on world prices by constant American dumping through aid gave imported wheat a price advantage over domestic grains. Thus proletarianisation in the Third World far from depending on national food markets occurred through imported American wheat, at the expense of domestic agricultural production (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989: 104).

It can be argued that, ever since the adoption of the policy, Pakistan became dependent on the importation of food grains for solving food crises (Khan and Shah, 2011). Perhaps, a clearer example of the long-term and mostly negative implications of aid-based agricultural intervention is the ‘Green revolution’ of 1960s. The ‘revolution’ introduced High Yield Varieties (HYV) of wheat and rice, agricultural machinery and credit facilities. The programme is celebrated as an enormous success for bringing 52% of the wheat area in Pakistan under modern varieties and for contributing to growth in agriculture at 6.3% between 1965 and 1970 (Chaudhry et al., n.d.: 32). However, it had two negative consequences. Firstly, the commercialisation of agriculture resulted in peasants being displaced from lands who ‘… either became semi-proletarians or had to scrape an existence while unemployed or under-employed’ (Amin-Khan, 2012: 176). Secondly, Murgai et al. (2001: 214-5) estimate that, in the long run, it could have reduced ‘… productivity growth by one-third overall, and in the case of wheat-rice, to practically cancel the effect of technological change’. This is because the seeds

… must have plenty of water, plenty of nourishment and plenty of chemical protection – pesticides and fungicides against disease; herbicides against the weeds that also thrive on fertiliser. The rub is that if a single one [emphasis original] of these elements is lacking, HYV can sometimes produce less [emphasis original] gain than what would have been obtained with traditional varieties (George, 1977: 88).

It can be added that, being illiterate, most Pakistani farmers might have actually overdosed the plantations with fertilisers and pesticides during the ‘Green
revolution’, making their farms, as a result, less productive and more disease-prone in the long run.

Currently, Pakistan scores 33.9% on the Global Hunger Index (GHI). GHI measures (1) undernourishment, (2) child wasting, (3) child stunting, and (4) child mortality in countries across the globe (IFPRI, 2015). Since the score of 33.9% is considered ‘serious’ (IFPRI, 2015: 18), the positing of ‘agriculture-for-development’ thesis seems a reasonable solution for resolving the problem of low agricultural productivity. However, this is an appendage of neoliberal discourse whereby development agencies through value-chain agriculture are connecting producers in developing countries to markets in such a way that ‘[o]nce structured into producing monocultures (whether beans, biofuels or cotton) producers can lose the capacity for diversified farming (and access to common lands) to sustain local food needs’ (McMichael, 2013b: 671-2). That is, instead of emphasising enhancing farmers’ knowledge and practices to improve their productivity in staple crops to overcome food shortages, international agencies, at least implicitly, seem to be creating and expanding markets for the GMOs, the hegemony over which is dictated by transnational corporations. In simpler terms, measures such as TAP appear to be paving way for the ‘commodification’ of agriculture in international food regime (McMichael and Schneider, 2011) through ‘bio-hegemony’ (Newell, 2009). Bio-hegemony means ‘the alignment of material, institutional and discursive power in a way which sustains a collation of forces which benefit from the prevailing model of agricultural development’ (Newell, 2009: 39). Newell (2009) originally coined the term with regard to the analysis of micro-politics of biotech corporations over aid, trade and development in a number of countries (Motta, 2014), but it is applicable to the interventions like The Agridevelopment Project (TAP). Secondly, whether introduced through governments or NGOs, entrepreneurial interventions – in our
case, The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) – do not aim at reducing the food insecurity of farmers and villagers at large. It is primarily aimed at farmers’ ‘development’ through the enhancement of their income. The socialising of farmers to take agriculture as ‘enterprise’ could work as ‘double-edged sword’: the prospects of making profits could make them produce cash crops for the market with a gradual erosion of interest to cultivate ‘traditional’ staple crops, such as wheat and rice.

Even if it is contested that RDO and the USAID were creating and expanding the market for the GMOs, the following analysis clearly suggests that the project was socialising farmers away from the cultivation of staple and other ‘traditional’ agricultural products. They explicitly expressed interest in cultivating GMOs-based off-season vegetables. For instance, when Mr. Matlab (age: 30s) was asked if he or the other staff-members considered both the positive and negative implications of the intervention, he reflected.

There is an area where one FEG had sown nine vegetables at one time. That FEG made a lot of money, so they have established 16 Kanal [≈ 2 acres] structure farming plot by spending its own money. Our vision is to get more yield from a small area and get high quality crops.

This was corroborated to me during the fieldwork. On 12th February 2014, I was accompanying the Funds Manager, Mr. Naqvy (age: 30s) on a field visit. He introduced me to Mr. Bajang (age: 30s), a CRP in village Dawarkhel. The CRP had a 1.21 hectares orchard of pears about which Mr. Naqvy said that Bajang planned to cut down the trees to build a structure farm. When I asked if it was true, Mr. Bajang confirmed, saying:

I would grow different vegetables like bitter gourd, cucumber and tomato [using structure-farm]. My friend had grown two jerib [≈ 1 acre] bitter gourd [in structure-farm], which earned him PKR. 500,000 [≈ £ 3,247]. My six jerib [≈ 3 acres] orchard earns me only Rs. 250,000 [≈
£1,623] [in one year] and his two *jerib* [≈ 1 acre] field earned him Rs. 500,000 [≈ £3,247] in six months.

As is discernible from the above, farmers engaged in ‘traditionally-grown’ crops were getting inspired to switch over to cash crops using structure farm technology. Moreover, these influences were not confined to just members of FEGs. The new farming technology was being received positively so much so that farmers from the nearby areas were also eager to adopting it. According to Mr. Matlab,

> Other villagers, who are not FEG members, are also asking us and FEG members about structure farming. They want to increase their know-how of best quality seed and technology. Our FEG members are working like extension workers.

Although this ‘spill over’ effect might be partly attributed to the provision of free agricultural inputs, which the poor farmers could not afford to buy, nonetheless the manifold financial return from the relatively new approach could also have inspired other farmers.

Relatedly, the socialisation of farmers through instruments, such as the 4-day Enterprise Development Training (EDT), also appear to be paving way for the commercialisation of agriculture and potential expansion of markets for the GMOs. This could be so because, although growing off-season vegetable through ‘structure farming’ was not entirely new to all the FEG members in the project areas as they had seen some of the big landowners in their areas practicing it for quite a few years, they did acknowledge and appreciate that they mastered the skills to build structure farming in the current and previous projects of RDO. The second, and perhaps the most dangerous, implication of such interventions is that the training about structure farms is socialising farmers into the large-scale use of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds, which cannot be grown without the use of fertilisers and pesticides. GMOs are not a novelty in Pakistan, as farmers in all the three districts
had basic knowledge about the GMOs. For instance, during the skill-enhancement sessions, I observed the instructor frequently referring to the use of ‘organic manure’ wherever possible and asked participants to use fertilisers and pesticides cautiously. Farmers would often whisper while the instructor spoke about such things:

Why is he saying these bookish things? I would have endorsed his expertise if he could practically do farming. Is not it a waste of our time?

The comment, ‘bookish things’ was made to mean that even the instructor could not get good yield without using fertilisers and pesticides. In the interviews and FGDs, farmers acknowledged that they had been using fertilisers and pesticides for quite a long time and it was impossible to get good yield without their application. When I asked them if the cash crop (GMO) seeds that they had begun using needed fertilisers, they made interesting remarks. Mr. Hikmat (age: 20s), an FEG member, said, ‘they are like industrial chicken. The more you feed the fertilisers, the better the yield’. Similarly, Mr. Mikdar (age: 20s) from the same FEG, authoritatively claimed, ‘I challenge that USAID experts or a PhD in agriculture cannot produce more yield without using fertilisers and pesticides in these fields’.

As mentioned above, most FEG members were not in the ‘businesses’ of cultivating cash-crops and those who practiced it had not much experience of doing it using structure farming. In this regard, RDO’s efforts were commendable for introducing farmers to new technologies and skills. RDO’s ‘vision’, to revert to Mr. Matlab’s comment, was to ‘get more yields from a small area’ and therefore the use of GMOs seemed ‘natural’ or ‘appropriate’ option. This was also endorsed by the Management Coordinator, Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), in the following terms.

These buggers [i.e., farmers] would hardly do 30 hours of labour a week on the farm. Now after the introduction of structure farming they don’t get time to stroll around in villages.
This was so because, according to Mr. Matlab, ‘Normal [i.e., organic] seed gives production for up to 85 days and structure farming [along with GMO seed] gives production for up to seven months’. Thus, the obvious reason for farmers’ opting for GMOs cultivation was primarily economic.

When I asked farmers as to what they foresaw with the frequent use of the fertilisers and pesticides on their farms, they primarily gave two reasons. Some guessed that every year newer fertilisers and pesticides were coming to the market, so they need not worry. In an FGD on 2 January 2014, one FEG member, Mr. Hamaan (age: 30s) remarked, ‘… these days newer and newer medicines [i.e., pesticides] are coming to the market. It can kill any worm’. When I raised the question about the sustainability of their practices in the long run, they resorted to religious reasoning and market-demand for GM crops. For instance, according to Mr. Mufty (age: 30s), ‘professor sayb, Khudai Maalik De [Mr. professor, God is the benefactor]’. In another FGD on 29 January 2014, the CRP, Mr. Mikdar (age: 20s) first commented cautiously, ‘see, only God knows the future. I am responsible for catering to the needs of my family’. However, when another FGD participant, Mr. Sheena (age: 30s) remarked, ‘it is better to use more intensive DP [fertiliser] and medicines [i.e., pesticides] than to have to steal or rob’, Mr. Mikdar said, ‘we try to be careful in applying fertiliser and pesticides but if consumers want GMOs, what can we do’.

Similarly, Mr. Ajeem, a CRP, argued that ‘we know that organic vegetables are great in taste but you do not get that much yield as from GMOs and because GMOs are so colourful, people buy them more’. Some of the farmers also argued more trenchantly that if they would not cultivate GMOs, others will and, as such, it was wise to take the initiative at the opportune time.

25 Farmers often used the term ‘worm’ to refer generically to all types of pests.
It also needs highlighting that RDO is primarily a rural development organisation and, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, its primary ‘developmental’ goal was to achieve ‘economies of scale’ by organising farmers and by helping them to increase their agricultural productivity. It is for this reason that the staff-members in the project justified their approach, stating that they were helping farmers to raise their income. The foregoing analysis suggests two things about RDO’s role in agricultural development. Firstly, the organisation is inadvertently contributing to the process of ‘commodification’ of agriculture. Secondly, and more importantly, even if its management had clarity about the implications of TAP, given the widespread emphasis on value-chain based entrepreneurial farming, RDO could not be imagined to have opted out. I explained in Chapter 2 that organisations can be exposed to ‘coercive isomorphic’ processes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991). Thus, it can be said that in the current ‘fashion’ of value chain interventions in agriculture, RDO, like many other NGOs, is ‘coerced’ to subscribe to the it.

The influence of ‘coercive’ processes on its goals and operations will especially become clear when I analyse in detail the delivery of agricultural items in TAP. It will be shown below that, contrary to RDO’s expectation that ‘… ASF’s shift in grant provision model from cash to in-kind will play a vital role in the completion of project interventions’ (RDO, 2012: 17), the project encountered problems. These were the (1) untimely delivery of and irregularities in training sessions, (2) delay in the delivery of agricultural inputs, and (3) the provision of inappropriate and bad quality agricultural inputs. Each of these is discussed in detail below.

6.2.2 Delay in the Delivery of Agricultural Skill-enhancement Training

On 22 November 2013, in a tea break during a skill-enhancement workshop, I learned from a CRP that the training was supposed to be conducted during the
initial phase of the sowing season (January/February 2013) immediately after the commencement of the project in October 2012. It was being delivered after a delay of 9 to 10 months. The farmers had already harvested their vegetables in May/June 2013, having learned structure-farming techniques from the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and some experienced farmers who had somehow learned the skill by observing the structure farms built by big landowners in their areas. They were being instructed about techniques, which they had somehow already learnt. It was, perhaps, partly a result of the delay in the training and partly out of the fact that a number of FEG-members were illiterate that I found the FEG-members the least interested in actively participating in the training sessions.

Related to this, I observed that RDO field–staff were quite concerned about filling in attendance forms and training evaluation forms. The FEG members were required to attend the training as it was included in the project protocol as part of which RDO regularly checked their attendance. The staff members insisted on regularly taking farmers’ attendance because it was their responsibility to ensure FEG members’ participation in the training and because the monitoring team of ASF could visit the training sessions any time. I saw RDO field-staff sometimes instructing and sometimes requesting the CRPs to bring all the trainees to the training sessions. In addition to regularly taking records of attendance, they also insisted that the CRPs collect all the filled-in training evaluation forms. These observations suggest that the members of staff and the FEGs had to work with each other on matters that sometimes did not interest them. For RDO-staff, the imperative to do so seemed to lie in the project protocol and the completion of assignments as agreed with the funder (USAID) and the implementing partner (ASF). For FEG members, training did enhance their learning but participating in it primarily guaranteed that they would receive agriculture goods worth PKR. 30,000 – 35,000 (≈ £200 – 233). This
interpretation is supported by additional observations. ASF had outsourced the above-mentioned training to a consultant. However, the consultant, who, the field-staff said, was a university professor, never showed up during the month-long training sessions. Instead, an official from the government’s Agriculture Department was teaching the theory sessions while teaching the practical lessons on designing farm-structure were the responsibility of the CRPs. Both the CRPs and the field staff knew that the professor had sub-contracted the assignment to the government official, but they would not publicly complain about it. Apparently, for RDO, it could mean interference in the non-issues. For FEG members, it did not matter partly because they received training and partly because they were promised agricultural goods.

6.2.3 Delay and Discrepancy in Agricultural Products

The FEG members were promised the delivery of (1) GM seeds, (2) bamboo sticks, (3) nylon thread, (4) packing material for harvested crops, and (5) steel-wire for structure farming. The project began in October 2012, with the plan to deliver agricultural inputs to FEGs by the time the cultivation season would begin in January/February 2013. However, the FEG members received the items in May/June 2013. Farmers’ opinions about the length of delay varied, but all complained about it. The goods arrived after a delay of 3 to 5 months at a time when the farmers were harvesting the vegetables from their structure-farms for which they had bought material with their own money. The community members pointed this out frequently. For example, in an FGD conducted on 23 March 2014, Mr. Yasin (age: 20s) an FEG member remarked, ‘bitter gourd seed was late by two months’. Similarly, Mr. Bajang (age: 30s) complained, ‘we needed seed in February 2013, but we got it in June 2013. We do not get seed and other material on time. This is our biggest problem’. Moreover, exception for GMO seeds, the rest of the materials
were of either low quality or entirely inappropriate. A participant in an FGD openly declared that the bamboo sticks were not of good quality, arrived late and were expensive. The contractor had bought it for Rs. 105 [≈ £0.7] per piece but its price is Rs. 40-50 [≈ £0.4] in the local market. Plastic was also of poor quality.

--- Mr. Maadi, (age: 20s), FEG member (FGD conducted on 29/01/2014)

Similarly, in another FGD, a participant made a funny remark about the poor quality of bamboos, which were shining due to the application of dye. We still have them. All the sticks have been attacked by termites and they have eaten them thoroughly. I could use them as wheat flour if its prices went high.

--- Mr. Bajang, (age: 30s), CRP of village (FGD conducted on 27/03/2014)

Farmers also gave estimates regarding embezzlement in the purchase of bamboo sticks. For instance, Mr. Mikdar (age: 20s), a CRP in village Batang, while participating in the FGD stated, ‘bamboo price is PKR. 170 [≈ £1] in the proposal. It can be purchased for Rs. 60 [≈ £0.5] in open market which means 100 rupees [≈ £0.7] corruption in one bamboo stick’. Each FEG member received 80 bamboo sticks. 58 FEGs had been formed and each FEG comprised of 15 members. On calculation (80x58x15 =) 69,600 bamboos were delivered. By a conservative estimate PKR. 55 [≈ £0.5] were paid extra for each bamboo. In sum, (PKR. 55.0 × 69,600 bamboos =) PKR. 38,82,000 (≈ £34,800) were spent in the name of FEGs but they did not receive any benefit out of that. The farmers also complained that they received inappropriately-sized plastic bags for packing, steel wire and nylon thread. Farmers’ frustration about these discrepancies can be gauged from Mr. Maadi’s following statement.
I do not remember his name but an RDO officer told us that they would contribute only 50% to the FEGs. We would be happy if they provided us 40% useful materials, which farmers really need. There is no benefit of providing non-useful things.

Such circumstances placed both the FEG members and the field staff in challenging situations. However, before referring to that, I will first outline the reasons for the provision of inappropriate items.

After the receipt of the Enterprise Development Training (EDT), which also included training on drafting matching-grant proposals, the FEG-members designed their matching-grant proposals for the provision of agricultural goods. Each FEG drafted its own proposal and, in accordance with the planned strategy, the most realistic grant proposal was selected and forwarded to the ASF and the USAID. The farmers drafted specifications of items in terms of their vernacular understanding of things. Nobody at the RDO and the ASF precisely ascertained the specifications of the items. The concerned member of staff from the RDO processed the grant proposals to the ASF without carrying out a detailed scrutiny of the document. ASF, in turn, also forwarded the same to the USAID without verification. Secondly, ASF had engaged a vendor for the provision of all agricultural inputs. The staff-members of ASF were not willing to participate in my research, but I learned from the field staff of RDO that it did not have any quality-control mechanism. During the skill-enhancement trainings in November/December 2013, I saw charpoys knotted with white cotton-ropes lying in a couple of Hujras. I learned from the community members that the cotton ropes in charpoys were what FEG members received instead of nylon thread for building structure-farms.

26 See p. 89 for description.
Ironically, the project faced problems during the second year (October 2013 – September 2014) as well. In January 2014, the field-staff confidently told me:

We learnt a lot from our mistakes. There would be no such mistakes next time.

--- Mr. Matlab (age: 30s)

But RDO staff could not foresee that the timely delivery of the right equipment would not happen in the second year of the project either. The cultivation season had begun in January/February 2014 but farmers did not receive the agricultural items by the end of March 2014. This was alarming particularly for tenant-farmers because they had leased farms in the hope that, in addition to receiving agricultural goods for free, they would also be able to make more profit from the produce of structure-farms, thereby making the tenancy very cheap for them. For instance, on 23 March 2014, an FGD participant expressed his concerns thus:

Only ten days are remaining in bitter gourd sowing, so we need materials. We always get materials, but too late. They should have given us materials by now.

--- Mr. Peer (age: 20s), FEG member

The president of his FEG, Mr. Jaandar (age: 20s), was quite angry as he, along with his members, had leased a large farm from a landlord. While showing me the seedlings that his group had cultivated on a tract of farm, he said:

I want to write an application to disband this FEG. We cannot afford loss, and they [RDO/ASF] are giving us nothing. [speaking sarcastically] not even my grandfather can buy that many bamboos. I have covered only small area [with personally purchased seeds]. How will I cover that centre of the farm if they do not provide me materials?
The ultimate goal of the project was to educate and help farmers work on value chains of bitter gourd, ridge gourd, tomato etc., so that they could work entrepreneurially to earn more money. Although none of the farmers could even rudimentarily discuss value chain, they were expecting to begin working on it. As one of the CRP said:

Groups were made in November/December 2012 and materials were provided to them in April about 20-25 days before the enterprise development training. Thus, one year project cycle is complete. Now, we will start working on value chain.

--- Mr. Mikdar (age: 20s)

However, this never happened as the project was suddenly terminated in May 2014. The unscheduled termination of the project placed the farmers and particularly RDO in a precarious situation. The following section analyses the process of its occurrence as well as the ‘tactics’ adopted by the field-staff to address the challenges of dealing with the farmers.

6.3 Implications of the Dilemmas for Farmers and RDO

It has been often found that NGOs are usually under pressure to deliver interventions according to donors’ terms (Hudock, 1999). Even if NGOs are genuinely working for long-term bottom-up change, their unequal relationship with the donors often limits their agendas in such ways that they end up using development jargon to merely sustain themselves without any meaningful change in the lives of poor people (Sahoo, 2013). Often, the funding relationships oblige them to merely work on “accountancy” rather than “accountability” (Edwards and Hulme, 1996: 968). It is appropriate to add though that the impact of funding relationships on NGOs and, in particular, their grassroots activities depend on which donor/funder
is being dealt with. Secondly, the politico-economic context of the relationship also matters.

For example, in 1988, it was the USAID which granted seed money for the establishment of the RDO. However, soon after the invocation of the Pressler amendment, the grant was withdrawn (RDO, 2016). After 9/11 when Pakistan became the ‘non-NATO ally’ in the war on terror, it became one of the top most countries for aid from the developed countries. The US has been particularly keen in this regard. It can be seen in the table below (p. 189) that between October 2009 and September 2014, the United States provided US$ 4,681 million assistance to Pakistan, including $652 million through the USAID. However, USAID has been top-down in its dealing with the NGOs. This may be because of the US government’s hegemonic stance after 9/11. Consider, for instance, the following statement of the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, which he made on 26th October 2001 while addressing leaders of NGOs at the ‘National Foreign Policy Conference’ in the Washington, D.C.

... just as surely as our diplomats and military, American NGOs are out there serving and sacrificing on the front lines of freedom. NGOs are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team (quoted in Bendana, 2006: 2)

It is relevant to mention that the USAID is not an NGO, but rather a bilateral aid agency of the US government. As such, the probability of its operating in hegemonic or top-down ‘combative’ manner is thus even higher than an American NGO. At least, its top-down approach with the RDO and the communities made it difficult for the organisation to achieve the objectives of the project and to maintain its relationships with the communities fairly.
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<td>Energy</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth (Including Agriculture)</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilisation (USAID)</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilisation (civilian Law Enforcement, Rule of Law, Counternarcotics)</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Humanitarian Assistance</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Transfers (Including BISP, CDCP, HEC Support, IDP Family Support, Malakand Housing)</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cutting – Democracy and Governance</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,329</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Flood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response/Recovery</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN/Red Cross Displaced Persons Relief</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Assistance through UN and NGOs</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster Assistance and Civic Aid (including in-kind contributions)</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food Aid – World Food Programme (FFP)</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOS/PRM Pakistan IDP’s (MRA/ERMA)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flood sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,352</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,681</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** USAID (2015: n.p.)
Instead of working to build a relationship of trust that could be democratic and empowerment-oriented, following Gough (2004), it will be shown that RDO and community-members kept on maintaining a working relationship until the end of the project, as both the stakeholders aimed at their own interests: RDO, like any other aid-dependent NGO, wanted to maintain a good relationship with both the community; community-members, while being least interested in long-term change to adopt value chain model of farming, expected free agricultural goods. As a result, both RDO and community worked to protect each other while accruing benefits according to their needs. This will become clear in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, farmers complained to me and criticised either RDO or ASF for failing to provide the agricultural goods in time but they never raised complaints in the presence of the field-staff. They particularly complained about the USAID’s policy of non-provision of fertilisers and pesticides. Yet, they kept on participating in the project activities. According to Mr. Maadi (age: 20s), an FGD participant, ‘much money is spent on fertiliser and seed. Plastic is also very important. It cost farmers about PKR. 10,000 - 20,000 [= £72 - 142]. Plastic [for making greenhouse], seed and fertilisers are three main things. They do not provide these’. The USAID turned down the requests for fertilisers and pesticides on two grounds. According to the farmers, the USAID believed that pesticides were harmful for the environment and fertilisers could be used for making explosives. Farmers vehemently criticised USAID’s grounds for the non-provision of fertilisers. According to the CRP, Mr. Mikdar (age: 20s), ‘the ASF persons said that the USAID thinks that fertilisers are used in explosives. They do not know that fertilisers are available in open market. They impose their decisions on the community’. Similarly, the CRP for the village Dawarkhel, Mr. Bajang (age: 30s) said, ‘they say that pesticides are not good for vegetables, and DAP [fertiliser], NP [fertiliser] etc. are used in explosives. They do
not give us those things, which we can use for other purposes. For example, we can spray pesticides on other crops. We can apply fertilisers to other crops. Metal wire and bamboo sticks cannot be used for sugar cane; you will have to use them for tomato and bitter gourd.

Similarly, the FEG members and the field-staff complained about USAID’s excessive documentation and backtracking on promises as a constant stress but they still continued managing day-to-day tasks. Once, while on a field visit in the company of Mr. Naqvy (age: 30s), Mr. Gul Zaman, the president of an FEG, holding a heap of papers stopped our vehicle and asked him:

You have damned us with these [showing the papers]. Why these new documents?

In response to which, Mr. Naqvy shrugged his shoulders helplessly saying,

We did not do this. USAID, dear. USAID!

The staff members pointed out the alleged bureaucratic approach of the USAID many times. For instance, when the FEGs were formed, the USAID asked for the copies of the resolutions and the terms of partnership (ToP) that the RDO had signed with the FEGs. Then USAID asked for the provision of the copies of farmers’ Computerised National Identity Cards to conduct anti-terrorism checks. Moreover, according to the staff members, the USAID did not have a pre-defined set of procedures and documentary requirements. It would instantaneously send instructions for the provision of various types of documents or ask for the revision of already shared documents. Similarly, according to the staff-members, the project aimed to be gender-sensitive by allocating 30% quota to form women’s FEGs. Women’s FEGs were planned to be trained in food preservation, for example, the preparation of ketchup, pickles etc. Accordingly, the field staff began working on
this, but the ASF team informed them that the USAID cancelled the intervention for women’s FEGs, thereby putting the field staff in a precarious position in relation to working with community members. Likewise, according to Mr. Matlab, ‘there were initially 21 value chains in this project’. That is, the project was planned to help farmers learn about various agents engaged in the production, distribution and consumption of 21 agricultural products. However, owing to too much interference and frequently changing procedures of USAID, value chain could not be properly introduced. Staff-members frequently referred to USAID as spendthrift. According to the Management Coordinator, Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), ‘USAID wants to spend money but they don’t want to work’. Mr. Naqvy went even a step further and remarked, ‘when USAID realises that the project is becoming really beneficial, it terminates it’.

In addition to the donor, RDO’s relationship with the farmers was also implicated by the alleged mismanagement of its implementing partner (i.e., ASF). Although the ASF-staff did not allow me to interview them, RDO staff told me that part of the reason for USAID’s interference was the ASF’s ‘unprofessional’ attitude. This seems a palpable reason. USAID did have cumbersome documentary procedures and requirements, but it was ASF which ultimately awarded the contract for the delivery of agricultural items to a vendor who provided inappropriate items to the farmers.

To manage challenges arising out of the above processes, the field staff adopted various tactics. For instance, during the field visits to a couple of villages in March 2014, I learned that the ASF gave them first aid boxes, which was not originally on the list of promised items. Moreover, some of the items from boxes were missing. Afterwards, on 24/04/2014, while travelling with Mr. Naqvy, I brought up the issue of the provision of the incomplete first-aid kit. He, rather whisperingly and exasperatedly, remarked:
the thing is farmers have been calling us day and night and we finally
gave them the phone numbers of the ASF staff members. The first-
aid kits have been given to close their mouths [from incessant complaining].

On another occasion, while travelling with the Team Leader, Mr. Dardmand (age:
40s), I noticed him putting his mobile phone on silent while it was ringing. When I
asked him why he did not attend to that, he said,

Unknown number! It would be a farmer asking about the delivery of items. What can I do?

Similarly, while discussing the core idea of achieving ‘economies of scale’ through
value chains, I asked Mr. Matlab about the reasons for its non-achievement in TAP,
he exasperatedly responded as follows.

There are many factors. Even I am also a factor. I have to meet my
target e.g., making a certain number of FEGs. I don’t care whether
they met the criteria or not but I have to achieve my target. People’s
habits have been spoiled by the earthquake [in 2005] and flood [in
2010]; they now always expect some tangible benefits. An
organisation of community members takes at least three years to
mature. You can’t expect to develop a good organisation in six
months project.

--- Mr. Matlab (age: 30s)

In May 2014, when I heard the news about the unscheduled termination of the
project, I visited the project office to confirm if it was true. I put the question to Mr.
Naqvy, who in response said:

Thanks Allah that the project has terminated. It is better to have no
job than to have a job where every now and then you will have to lie
to the community. I tell you projects like these damage communities’
trust in us. USAID makes unrealistic protocols. We make promises
based on that and instead of providing the stuff they want us to
complete the documentary requirements.
As stated above, despite acknowledging these issues and raising complaints, both the staff members and the farmers kept on dealing with each other in an apparently ‘amicable’ environment. Ironically, while the community members expressed their concerns to me, during the training sessions when field-staff were present, I only occasionally noticed farmers being as explicitly and vehemently critical as they were when in isolation from the RDO-staff. Similarly, the front-line staff complained about farmers as merely being interested in material benefits, but they never expressed it in farmers’ presence. Arguably, both groups had stakes in each other’s survival and sustenance and had developed a kind of ‘working relationship’, which is describable as a two-way patron-client relationship. That is since community members were receiving free agricultural inputs in a project introduced by the RDO, they kept silent about discrepancies and misappropriations in the project. RDO staff, on the other hand, did not insist on asking farmers to be pro-actively participative in the project and afterwards as long as the documentary requirements were completed. The following illustrations from the field will make this interpretation clearer.

On 12th February 2014, an ‘environmental consultant’, who was externally hired by the USAID, came for a field visit to check if farmers were using organic manure and if their farms were according to the USAID’s environmental protocol. While walking through the fields, the president of one of the FEGs pointed towards a small load of animal manure and addressed the officer thus:

Sir, we use this on our farms. In earlier times farmers were stupid. They have become wiser now and use this [pointing towards the manure load]. They are also careful not to mix shoppers etc. with animal manure. See it is clean [i.e., not containing polythene bags and other inorganic substances]!
In the meantime, while I was looking at the consultant who nodded slightly (perhaps approving the president’s remarks), the Funds Manager, Mr. Naqvy approached me and, twitching his eye, whispered over my shoulder:

See, we groom such parrots to report positive things about the project!

Likewise, early on 1st February 2014, an ex-CRP made explicit reference to this aspect of RDO’s work in the following words.

For presentation, they keep these types of people. They, one way or the other, support them and when any donor comes, when monitoring people come then these people [community activists] sitting here have communion with RDO and these people sit with and satisfy the donors/monitoring teams though things are not that way as portrayed in the presentation.

--- Mr. Faraan (age: 40s), CRP

In The Agridevelopment Project (TAP), the imperative to prepare ‘parrots’ derived from the hasty process of doing things which were essentially time-consuming processes, e.g., value chain, entrepreneurship etc. But because, as we saw above, staff-members were supposed to undertake multiple documentary assignments in situations when procedural (documentary) criteria from USAID changed frequently, they groomed some people in the community, usually CRPs, to project positive outcomes of the interventions, even if in reality they were not.

It is almost impossible to determine whether poverty or merely the prospects of free goods motivated farmers to ‘lie’. Perhaps, it is safe to assume that both factors compounded to make them ‘lie’ whenever monitoring was conducted. In this regard, participants in one of the FGDs engaged quite insightfully reflected as follows.

Mr. Mikdar: We will be responsible if someone found out this discrepancy in the documented prices of agriculture
items and actual market prices. RDO can never blame ASF because ASF provides them funding. RDO would ask me and I would request Mr. Maadi not to disclose things because we would not be able to get anything if he did so.

Mr. Maadi: He is right. We often give false information because we fear they might refuse to provide us materials in the future.

Mr. Ajeem: USAID could cancel the project if they came to know about this, so we hide facts.

It is clear from the above that farmers did not see RDO as responsible for the problems. Nevertheless, the need to retain a working relationship with RDO in the hope of receiving something thus obliged them to hide facts during verification by monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers.

For staff-members, the situation at the field-level further compounds due to a major issue at community level. According to staff-members, community members were short sighted and impatient in that they perceived RDO and other NGOs as a means for the free delivery of goods. They complained that it was impossible for them to motivate community members to unite as an organisation (FEG, CO etc.) unless they (RDO-staff) had some tangible offers, such as infrastructure scheme and agricultural goods.

The foregoing illustrates that the relationship between the community and RDO staff is interpretable in terms of mutual patron-client relationships. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to mention that, during the fieldwork regarding TAP, field-staff frequently asserted that the shortcomings in the project were particularly very high only in this project and that in other projects RDO was far better in terms of achieving the stated outputs. The following chapter thus presents data regarding another project to
ascertain if it was really working better in terms of long-term community-driven change.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of The Agridevelopment Project (TAP), which RDO and ASF jointly implemented with financial support from USAID. It outlined the factors due to which the intervention strategy of previous projects for supporting farmers was revised and modified in TAP. It was found that the project was innovative in introducing structure farming to farmers with the help of which they could lengthen the lifetime of their cash crops and get more yield for an extended period of time. Similarly, the project was also innovative in introducing value chain agriculture and its emphasis on off-season cash crop vegetables. Moreover, both staff-members and farmers not only appreciated the innovations, but also most farmers reaped high economic returns by adopting the innovations. However, keeping the larger and longer-term implications in perspective, the chapter argued that commercialisation of agriculture through the introduction of GMOs, though beneficial for farmers’ incomes, might also implicitly socialise them to produce goods for markets, thus endangering the environment as well as making them subservient to market fluctuations. In addition to this, the chapter also identified a number of problems in the project, such as delay in the delivery of training and agricultural inputs, provision of inappropriate items and non-provision of the most vital inputs of fertilisers and pesticides. It was demonstrated that farmers were happy with the overall intervention, but incessantly complained about the above issues. It was found that staff-members, and to a large extent farmers as well, considered USAID’s undue interference and backtracking on its promises as a major hurdle in making the project a complete success. Secondly, according to both sets of interviewees, the ‘unprofessionalism’ of ASF further led to delays and the
delivery of substandard items. However, interestingly, it was found that, despite farmers’ reservations, they carried on participating in the project in the hope of receiving free inputs. Correspondingly, it was also demonstrated that field-staff of RDO dealt with farmers’ complaints through various strategies. On the basis of these findings, the chapter argued that poor farmers engaged in the project in the expectations to receive free goods, a phenomenon which became quite common in the NGO sector in the post 9/11 aid regime in Pakistan. Moreover, caught between USAID’s requirements to demonstrate ‘success’ and farmers’ complaints, RDO resorted to clientelism by asking farmers to conceal facts at times of monitoring and evaluation. The farmers did so because they received free agricultural goods. That is, there was a mutual patronage-based relationship between community members and RDO. However, bearing in view staff-members’ assertion that other projects of RDO were not suffering from problems that The Agridevelopment Project encountered, it cannot be pre-emptively concluded that the relationship between RDO and community members is thoroughly patronage-based and/or that RDO is always succumbing to donors’ terms and conditions. The next chapter assesses the validity of the above argument in the light of data collected in relation to another project of RDO.
Chapter 7 – Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation through Innovative interventions

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated that the innovative agricultural intervention, though beneficial for farmers’ income in the short-term, might have negative ecological and financial implications for farmers in the long run. It also found that RDO tended to maintain a patronage-based relationship with the community members.

The current chapter seeks to assess whether RDO’s interventions in credit-provision and institutional development in the villages contributed towards its goal of democratisation and empowerment of the rural poor. It specifically analyses the influence of donors, community social structure and the political economy of aid flow to determine whether RDO’s goal of achieving ‘economies of scale’ (RDO, n.d.: 2) through innovations in microfinance and social mobilisation is successful. The chapter also aims to determine the implications of such interventions for sustainable bottom-up change in the communities and for RDO’s managerial and field-level practices. The analysis is based on the fieldwork conducted into the ‘Livelihood Development Programme (LDP)’ funded by Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section sets the context of the project and briefly presents its background, including details about funding, timeframe, objectives and the implementation strategy. The second section presents an analysis of the poverty scorecard, a poverty assessment tool, which has been
introduced relatively recently. The section critically reviews the reasons for the adoption of the new tool and analyses the administrative factors and methodological issues. These aspects are analysed with a view to determine the efficacy and implications of the tool for RDO’s goal.

Drawing particularly on the views of experienced staff, the third section presents an historical overview of the rationale for RDO’s introduction of microfinance and the process of service-delivery in the sector. Keeping in view the analytical concerns to identify politico-economic and institutional influences on RDO’s interventions, the section analyses the factors that positively and negatively influenced its practices regarding microfinance. In addition, the section analyses data collected in relation to one of the women-led village-banks established by the RDO. It is conducted to determine the efficacy and implications of its operations for women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Section four pulls together the analysis presented in the preceding two sections to assess whether the interventions paved the way for RDO’s ultimate goal of organising community members on sustainable basis. In this regard, the analysis presents the formation process of Community Organisations, Village Organisations and Local Support Organisations in LDP along with the field-level, organisational and wider political economic factors that influenced their formation process. Finally, the chapter presents the implications of these findings for RDO.

7.1 The Livelihood Development Programme (LDP) in ‘Border Districts’ of NWFP: Background, Goals and Strategy

The Livelihood Development Programme (LDP) was a three-years project (June 2010 – May 2013) funded by the Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID) with an amount of Pakistani Rupees (PKR) 510 million (Aus$ 6.987
millions). Its goal was ‘… to reduce rural poverty through reviving livelihoods and empowering communities’ (RDO, 2009: 3) in the three districts of Hall, Fall and Gall. The goal was envisaged to be achieved through the following ‘programme components’ (RDO, 2009: 3-4):

- To empower poor/vulnerable groups, reviving community collective action and rebuilding community institutions to enable them to make claims to their rights.
- Improve livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, especially women in the target area.
- Advocacy and lobbying initiatives to bolster support for the long-term strategic needs of the poor and vulnerable, especially women.
- Developing the capacity of state actors in participatory approaches/community development.

To achieve these components, the projected delivered interventions in the areas of (1) Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) development, (2) enterprise and value chain development, (3) microfinance, (4) Natural Resource Management (NRM), and (5) Human Resource Development (HRD) (see Appendix 8). The project covered 6 Union Councils. A three-tiered management structure was designed for the achievement of the project objectives. Under the leadership of the General Manager (GM) of RDO, the Programme Managers (PMs) of each section at the Headquarter were responsible for providing strategic guidance to the project. A separate Project Support Unit (PSU) was established to monitor achievements and outputs on regular basis and to schedule activities in relation to the interventions, a.

At PSU level, programme officers were appointed to oversee interventions in the

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27 See Chapter 5, p. 147-48 for description.
above-mentioned areas. To manage the day-to-day activities with the communities three Social Organisation Units (SOUs), one in each district, were established. Each SOU was headed by a Deputy Programme Manager (DPM), under whose administration field officers of each section carried out their respective field activities.

To identify the deserving community members for the delivery of the interventions, RDO conducted a survey. It was conducted through the application of the ‘Poverty Scorecard’, a new poverty assessment tool. The survey process had implications for the delivery of the interventions. Therefore, before presenting the analysis of the interventions, the following section presents an analysis of the factors due to which RDO adopted the new tool, the factors that influenced its administering as well as its implications for the organisation.

7.2 Identifying the Poor through the Poverty Scorecard

NGOs often use participatory poverty assessment (PPA) for the identification of the poor people and the mapping of their needs and problems, which is one of the four approaches to the measurement of poverty. The other three approaches are (i) monetary poverty, (ii) capability poverty and (iii) social exclusion poverty (Laderchi et al., 2003: 247-62; see also, Kwadzo, 2015; Wagle, 2002). PPA evolved out of the broader Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is ‘... an approach and methods for learning about rural life and conditions from, with and by rural people’ (Chambers, 1994: 954; see also, Chambers, 2002). However, as will become clear below, partly due to the methodological limitations of PPAs and partly due to donors’ influence, a number of NGOs, including RDO, have recently switched to using Poverty Scorecard. This is an expenditure-based tool for poverty assessment (Schreiner, 2010: 327), which places it largely in the domain of monetary/absolute
poverty. So, before proceeding to describe the reasons for its adoption, it appears relevant to review literature on the other three types of poverty measurement methods, with particular reference to monetary poverty.

The monetary measure, often regarded as ‘absolute poverty’, is the oldest and perhaps the most widely used of the four approaches to poverty (Mencher, 1972). The standard approach entails the development of a nutritional standard to draw a poverty line by taking income/expenditure as proxy indicator for nutrition using food energy or food share method (Lister, 2004). Thus developed, the measure, which is claimed to be ‘objective’, is used to distinguish the poor from the non-poor. However, firstly, based on gender, class, climate, occupation and other aspects, people’s lives and hence their needs vary (Alcock, 2006). Secondly, caloric estimates are judgemental and do not reflect diversity in terms of class, race and gender, no matter at which level it is measured (Baulch, 1996). Thirdly, it identifies a single (low cost) food plan, thus assuming every housekeeper to be ‘efficient’ in managing nutritional and other needs of the household members with a limited amount of money (Rein, 1971). Fourthly, the ‘physical’ or ‘nutritional’ definition is narrow as well as arbitrary because it does not account for changes in the types of goods in the market and/or changes in people’s habits (Abel-Smith and Townsend, 1972; see also, Alcock, 2006: 82-94; Baulch, 1996: 36-42; Rein, 1971: 46-63). Finally, in gendered terms, the approach assumes a ‘unitary model of household’ that has dominated ‘... economic approaches to poverty analysis and [has] informed many of the policies intended to address poverty’ (Kabeer, 2003: 104).

Fabian social policy analysts challenged the ‘absolute’ approach and advocated a ‘relative’ one. Since there is always a modicum of judgement involved in defining poverty, it was thought better to compare the standard of living of the poor and those deemed non-poor (Alcock, 2006). Townsend (1979) was forthcoming in
critiquing absolute poverty (Thomas, 2000) and argued that ‘[p]overty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation … [that is] … [i]ndividuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the society to which they belong’ (Townsend, 1979: 31). The debate further expanded when Sen (1983) coined the ‘capability’ approach and argued that ‘…the poverty line may be defined to represent the level at which a person can not only meet nutritional requirements, etc., but also achieve adequate participation in communal activities (as characterised by Townsend) and be free from public shame from failure to satisfy conventions (as discussed by Adam Smith)’ (Sen, 1983: 167). For instance, illiteracy or lack of access to healthcare may hamper an individual’s inability to participate in ‘communal’ activities (Waglé, 2002: 158). Parallel to these developments, 1970s also saw the emergence of the concept of ‘social exclusion’ (UNDP, 1997). The concept, which originated in France and spread throughout the global North (Thomas, 2000), aims ‘… to analyse the condition of those who are not necessarily income-poor – though many are that too – but who are kept out of the mainstream of society even if not income-poor’ (UNDP, 1997: 17).

In contrast to these expert-led approaches to poverty, RDO, like most NGOs, used participatory methods, such as problem ranking, wealth ranking, and poverty ranking (see, for example, Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan, 1998). Although these methods are empowerment-oriented and aim at capturing the meaning of social phenomena, such as poverty, powerlessness and inequality from the perspective of the research participants, the results cannot be compared over time or from one area to another (Schreiner, 2009: 2). For instance, in poverty ranking,
villagers categorise their households as ‘destitute’, ‘very poor’, ‘poor’, ‘better off’, or ‘well to do’ but this creates two problems: ‘First to facilitate the formation of a CO [Community Organisation], the perceived pro-poor bias of RSPs [Rural Support Programmes] can inflate the number of members regarded as poor and very poor. Second, the number of the poor and very poor cannot be compared across villages (or regions) and aggregated because the assessment is location-specific’ (Khan, 2004: 4). The ex-project coordinator of RDO, Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s), echoed these limitations. While strongly supporting poverty scorecard, he narrated his experience of working with the communities thus:

Earlier we would ask community members about poverty. That was based on their perception. We would ask community who is poor among you and they would say we all are poor. When we would probe more and more, then they would say that these and those individuals are poor but that was criticised. We were required to develop a scientific approach [emphasis added].

To overcome the limitations of the participatory methods, RDO adopted the quantitative ‘consumption expenditure-based survey’ used by the government of Pakistan and donors (RDO, n.d.-a: 4). However, that too turned out to be taxing in terms of time and resources, and it did not depict household circumstances realistically as well.

The search for a ‘scientific’ solution finally ended in 2009 when RDO began using Poverty Scorecard to ‘… strike a balance between qualitative and quantitative approaches …’ (RDO, n.d.-a: 4). Poverty Scorecard has been designed for more than 64 countries (Schreiner, n.d.) including Pakistan (RDO, 2011a). Schreiner (2009; 2010) asserts that two features makes it distinctively superior to survey questionnaires and participatory approaches (see Figure 7.1, p.207): Firstly, ‘… it is tailored to the capabilities and purposes … of local, pro-poor organisations’ (Schreiner, 2010: 327); secondly, the results obtained from NGOs’ use of
participatory wealth ranking or ‘blunt’ rules such as land-ownership or housing quality ‘… are typically subjective and relative…’ (Schreiner, 2010: 327). He (2009; 2010) also claims that in contrast to the typical survey instruments, e.g., the 45 page-long questionnaire of 2005/06 ‘Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM)’, his poverty scorecard is:

… simple, quick, and inexpensive. [Moreover, it is an] … easy-to-use poverty scorecard that pro-poor programs in Pakistan can use to estimate the likelihood that a household has expenditure below a given poverty line, to monitor groups’ poverty rates at a point in time, to track changes in groups’ poverty rates over time, and to target services to households. … [moreover, it is an] objective tool with known accuracy. … [e]xtra work is minimised; non-specialists can compute scores by hand in the field in 5 to 10 minutes because the scorecard has only 10 indicators, only categorical indicators, and only integer points that require no arithmetic beyond basic addition (Schreiner, 2010: 326-34).

The original poverty scorecard for Pakistan (Figure 7.1, p. 207) comprised of 10 indicators, but, in LDP, RDO used a modified version designed by the World Bank (RDO, 2011a: 6) (see Appendix 9). The modified version comprises of 13 statistically weighted questions, which are believed to be simple, objective, easy to use for the collection of data quickly and the results from which can be aggregated at higher levels (RDO, 2011a).

Based on an individual’s responses to the 13 questions, his/her household is placed into one of the following four bands of poverty (Table 7.1, p. 208). That is, the lower the score of a household, the higher the chances for its adult male and female members to access interventions in LDP. Despite these assertions, the data gathered with the tool suffered from discrepancy. The following section elaborates on the actual data collection process and factors which contributed to the discrepancies.
### Figure 7.1: Simple Poverty Scorecard for Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In what province does the household live?</td>
<td>A. Balochistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Northwest Frontier Province</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Sindh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Punjab or Islamabad</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many household members are 13 years old or younger?</td>
<td>A. Five or more</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Four</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Three</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Two</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. One</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. None</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many children ages 5 to 13 attend school?</td>
<td>A. Not all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. All, or no children ages 5 to 13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How many household members work in elementary occupations (not senior officials, managers, professionals, technicians or associated professionals, clerks, salespeople, service or shop workers, skilled workers in agriculture or fishery, craft or trade workers, or plant/machinery operators)?</td>
<td>A. Two or more</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. One</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the highest educational level completed by the female head/spouse?</td>
<td>A. Less than Class 1 or no data</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. No female head/spouse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Class 1 or higher</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What is the main source of drinking water for the household?</td>
<td>A. Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Hand pump, covered/closed well, motorized pump/tube well, or piped water</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What type of toilet is used by your household?</td>
<td>A. None or other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Flush connected to pit/septic tank or open drain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Flush connected to public sewerage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Does the household own a refrigerator or freezer?</td>
<td>A. No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Does the household own a television?</td>
<td>A. No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does the household own a motorcycle, scooter, car, or other vehicle?</td>
<td>A. No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Schreiner (2010: 328)
Table 7.1: Categories of Households in Poverty Scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Band</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Poor</td>
<td>0 – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Poor</td>
<td>12 – 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitory Poor</td>
<td>19 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non – Poor</td>
<td>24 – 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RDO (2011a: 12)

Table 7.2: Interventions Delivered in the Early Recovery Project (ERP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERP interventions</th>
<th>Achievements/Outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Mobilisation (formation of Community Organisations [COs])</td>
<td>70 Male Cos and 37 female Cos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash-for-work</td>
<td>PKR. 2,982,985 disbursed among 823 labourers employed in 655 projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Physical Infrastructure (CPIs)</td>
<td>4002 households benefited with 87 CPIs costing PKR. 38.41 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Extension Workers</td>
<td>79 workers trained in livestock and poultry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resource Management (NRM)</td>
<td>15 Research &amp; Demonstration plots established with the support of government line department of agriculture and livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1221 farmers provided with free seeds for cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11365 animals vaccinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>PKR. 1.5 million given to 61 entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RDO (2011c: 3)

7.2.1 Poverty Scorecard in LDP: Issues and Limitations

AusAID sanctioned the project in early 2010 (RDO, 2011c: 5). However, in July 2010, the monsoon flood affected 2.5 million people throughout Pakistan (BBC, 2010), including the target areas of the project. After consulting the donor, RDO temporarily changed the intervention-strategy to provide relief and rehabilitation,
which was called ‘Early Recovery Programme (ERP)’. The temporary phase ran between August 2010 and December 2010, under which RDO provided relief and rehabilitation initiatives (Table 7.2, p.208).

The early recovery programme implicated the Poverty Scorecard survey. Since flood hampered the originally mandated timeframe for the beginning of LDP in June/July 2010, when the ‘regular’ phase began in February/March 2011, two to three months were left in the completion of its first year. The top management of RDO decided to achieve the targets set for the first year by the end of May 2011. It was decided to conduct the survey in 9 out of the 18 target Union Councils (UCs) (RDO, 2011a: 8). The staff-members were trained in data collection through Poverty Scorecard. They, in turn, trained 98 enumerators hired from the very villages where the data was supposed to be collected (RDO, 2011a: 6). According to the Community Specialist, Mr. Daaman (age: 30s), locals were hired for data collection because

> if we are not there even then they can perform their duty, as 10 or 20 days are given to us for Poverty Scorecard. Second, they know the people by name as they are the members of the same village and they do not have any problem while filling the forms.

Moreover, to ensure accuracy in the data collection, the staff members were mandated to supervise the enumerators and cross-verify 8-10% of the data (RDO, 2011a: 9-10). Despite these measures, there was discrepancy in the data. This was due to both the administrative oversight to conduct the survey hastily and methodological issues in the Scorecard, which are discussed in the following section.
7.2.2 ‘Circumstantial’ and Methodological Issues and Implications of the Tool

From the claims made about the Poverty Scorecard (e.g., Schreiner, 2010: 326-34), it would follow that the 98 enumerators hired for the survey should have collected ‘objective’, and ‘accurate’ data ‘quickly’. However, some interviewees complained about the high poverty score due to which they or other community members became ineligible for grants and training. For instance, Mr. Ustaz (age: 20s), a participant in an FGD, complained about discrepancy in the data and implications in the following terms.

Unfortunately, survey was conducted in such a way that poor people’s score is high. So, when trainings\textsuperscript{28} or grants are announced and we give their [poor CO members’] names, the LDP staff-members say their score is high and they are not eligible.

Another participant, Mr. Taqweem (age: 30s), a CRP from village Shahbaz confirmatively added that

Our Union Council’s survey has been done and we are on the same page. They have shown poor as rich and rich as poor.

As described above, each response in the 13 questions had a (statistical) weight: ticking yes/no about the availability of household items such as stove, TV, washing machine, fridge etc. could decrease/increase poverty score of the households. ‘There could be two reasons’, Mr. Ustaz added, ‘either the person who was conducting the survey had made a mistake in writing or the respondent gave him the wrong information’. Since discrepant data had implications for the non/eligibility

\textsuperscript{28} For example, vocational training, trainings in enterprise, natural resource management and value chain development.
of villagers for project interventions, it is worth-probing as to how the two types of ‘mistakes’ occurred.

As mentioned above, the 98 enumerators were hired from the communities. While the interviewees confirmed this practice, they also raised questions about the accuracy of the data. For instance, Mr. Bajang (age: 30s), a Community Resource Person (CRP) from village Dawarkhel in Peshawar, who had been working with RDO for more than ten years, confirmed that, saying: ‘I sent two persons for that training. They both were trained on form-filling. I directed them to cover half village each from the opposite side. I had monitored them’. Similarly, Mr. Marjan (age: 20s) from village Taluq said that

The survey was conducted by the president of our village bank.29

According to the survey report, ‘[each field] supervisor typically submitted between 35 and 190 completed PSC [Poverty Scorecard] forms on a daily basis to the SOU [Social Organisation Unit] office’ (RDO, 2011a: 11). The possibility of enumerators filling-in data by themselves was also raised by a number of interviewees. Some also contended that it might have been done to make money. The survey report is silent on these issues, but it mentions the challenges, such as the problem of locating and recruiting respondents at the time of harvesting season, hot weather, fabrication of responses by the respondents etc. (RDO, 2011a). These problems, coupled with the pressure to do the task quickly, might have contributed to enumerators’ collection of data from irrelevant people or inputting data on their own.

__________________________________________

29 For the purposes of anonymity, the name of the president is not mentioned.
To verify whether or not the views expressed by the community were ‘biased’, the staff members were consulted. Interestingly, the management did not acknowledge the issue of non-supervision in data collection, but confidently said that

90% of the survey data will be correct.

--- Mr. Pindaar (age: 30s), Financial Consultant

Although the field-staff acknowledged discrepancy in the data, they complained about the shortage of time and non-cooperation by the management as reasons for inconsistency. For instance, Mr. Daaman (age: 30s), the Community Specialist, remarked that

When early recovery Programme completed, we had only two months and the PSU and Head Office said that the targets for the regular phase needed to be completed. In that the Poverty Scorecard, the formation of Community Organisations and the intervention delivery were also included. We had to do all these in two months.

A Social Organiser from district Fall, Mr. Cheema (age: 30s), complained that

In the Poverty Scorecard training we were told that the social organisers would be supervisors and the PSU team would monitor them but the PSU team came to us not even a single time. They have not monitored the field visits. They have not pay any attention to our problems.

It appears that the administrative oversight and the rush to fill a maximum number of questionnaires each day forced enumerators to collect data without clarifying the questions appropriately, probing into the responses of the respondents and/or asking questions from relevant individuals. As such, RDO is criticisable for collecting discrepant data. This, nonetheless, is only a partial explanation for the inaccuracies in the data. Part of the reason for the discrepancy in the data lay in the methodological limitation of the tool, which is shown below.
It is claimed that the poverty scorecard is an ‘… objective tool with known accuracy’ (Schreiner, 2009: 2; 2010: 327). In reality, however, the scorecard is arguably ‘simplistic’ rather than ‘simple’, as the title of the papers suggests (Schreiner, 2009; 2010). Firstly, question items and response categories were not appropriately customised to the social and economic conditions of the areas. A number of interviewees contested the idea of asking about the household items as criteria for determining poverty. They said that these days even poorer households had small gas-stoves, refrigerator, or water pump, which they might have purchased either by instalments or as second-hand items. Mr. Taqweem (age: 30s) criticised the question items as follows.

Every house has a washroom. We would tell them we have bathrooms and they tick marked it. Doesn’t matter whether it would be a proper bathroom or mud-built but they marked it as yes. For example, if I had a small picnic gas cylinder and they asked: ‘do you have a stove?’ As farmers call small picnic cylinder as stove, so they said yes and the enumerators marked it as yes. If men were not at home, then women would answer the questions who are not as sharp as men and as women like to show off they would answer every question as yes.

Secondly, RDO’s policy of non-disclosure regarding the purpose and intent of the survey also contributed to discrepancy in the data. The policy of non-disclosure owes its origin to RDO’s experience about the community’s tendency to fabricate responses about their household circumstances. Participatory poverty assessment was abandoned because it captured ‘subjective’ aspects of poverty and every participant would claim to be poor (see Mr. Sarmad’s view on p. 205). However, as is clear from the interviewees’ remarks, the purportedly ‘objective’ and ‘accurate’ nature of the Scorecard could not bypass these issues. Thirdly, questions about the non/availability of toilette, washing machine or the number of school-going children are viewed differently by different sets of adults based on their education, class and gender. For instance, as per Mr. Taqweem’s remarks above, if most women have
the tendency to ‘show off’ while giving information about household items, then it means that just one circumstantial factor of the harvesting season, when male members of the household are busy in the farms, would affect the quality of the data. Thus, in a way, just as PPAs, if conducted repeatedly with different members of the household, produced temporally and geographically non-comparable data, so might the Poverty Scorecard.

The preceding point brings up the final critique of the tool from a gender perspective. It obscures the fact that women’s poverty is often hidden whenever it is measured at household level or at family level (Millar and Glendinning, 1992). The measurement of poverty in income terms at household level is argued to have two biases: firstly, by estimating poverty at a single scale level, i.e., household income, it suffers from a ‘measurement bias’ in that it assumes equal distribution of intra-household resources; secondly, the measure suffers from an ‘institutional bias’ in the sense that it prioritises market as distributor or mechanism for satisfying needs and thus bypasses gender inequality in the fulfilment of basic needs (Kabeer, 1996). Although poverty scorecard is an expenditure-based tool (Schreiner, 2009; 2010), its measurement at the household level nonetheless exposes it to the above critique in that it does not measure ownership, control and usage of intra-household assets. These issues have implications for RDO and for the community, which are highlighted below.

Firstly, in contrast to the PPA where the field-staff would intensively interact with a wide variety of people in the villages, the Scorecard might gradually change this into a one-time interaction. More importantly, the administering of the survey through the enumerators from the community is a kind of ‘outsourcing’ of the fieldwork through which the field-staff and the community members would develop a level of affinity and collaborative engagement with each other. Secondly, keeping the above gender
critique in view, if a household is categorised as ‘non-poor’, but its women members
do not have or are given limited access to household assets, then it might have two
negative implications: women in such households would be deprived of the
opportunity to access interventions; working on the basis of gender-blind results,
RDO might turn into an organisation for the perpetuation of gender-based
inequalities. Finally, RDO believes in the social guidance of the poor, but the fact
that the tool does not provide detailed qualitative information about the poor might
mean that the organisation would merely operate in a top-down manner for the
delivery of tangible items to become merely a distributor of welfare items.

7.3 Poverty Alleviation and Women’s Empowerment through
Microfinance: Background

The history of providing financial services through group-based lending, often
referred to as social collateral (Mayoux, n.d.) or solidarity lending (Zulfiqar, 2013), is
traceable to the credit cooperatives established by Raiffeisen in 19th century
Germany (Bastelaer, 2000). However, in common parlance, the Grameen Bank’s
lending small loans to poor men and women in rural Bangladesh in early 1970s
(Khandakar Qudrat and Rahman, 2006) and UNO in Brazil (Bastelaer, 2000) are
considered as pioneers in microfinance services. The process initially involved the
provision of small loans to subsistence farmers and entrepreneurs (men and
women) through social collateral. That is, the poor organised into groups would
provide guarantee and assurance to the bank regarding the eligibility of a member-
borrower. This procedure was also considered to facilitate community engagement
(Osmani, 2007) and strengthen social capital by developing a sense of shared
values and solidarity (Bastelaer, 2000). The innovation began as a social mission for
poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor (Hulme and Maitrot, 2014),
particularly women (Pitt et al., 2006). The assumption was that if the poor, who
could not access commercial banks (Rutherford, 1999), were lent loans, it would create employment/income-generating opportunities thereby enabling entrepreneurs to enter into a virtuous cycle of savings and investment. By extension, this economic empowerment was supposed to translate into social and political empowerment (Mayoux, 1998; Wright, 1999).

In the early 1990s, this simple loan provision, which was called microcredit, evolved into microfinance to include credit, savings, and insurance services (Bastelaer, 2000) and became popular in policy circles. There also developed a division between the ‘financially-minded donors [e.g., the World Bank] and [the] socially-minded programmes [e.g., Grameen Bank]’ (Morduch, 2000: 618). The financial perspective gradually became more pronounced (Ebdon, 1995), which emphasised commercial expansion and sustainability of credit-disbursement. The World Bank has been particularly supportive from this perspective. The first edition of Ledgerwood’s (1998) handbook on microfinance produced for the World Bank considered it as an intervention for poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment, but the recently revised version (Ledgerwood et al., 2013) promotes it merely as means for designing financial services organisations (Zulfiqar, 2013).

Microfinance was particularly heralded as means for women’s empowerment in the developing countries. Particularly, its group-based lending methodology for poverty alleviation was considered to be potentially beneficial. In order to understand how it can empower women, it seems appropriate to first understand what empowerment is. Empowerment is a contested concept in terms of definition and measurement (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Scholarly contributions from Kabeer (1999; 2001; 2005), Mosedale (2005) and Rowland (1999) are some of the examples about its contested nature. The problem in large part derives from the multidimensionality of the core concept of power (Lukes, 2005). Nevertheless, Kabeer’s (1999; 2001;
2005) conceptualisation of empowerment is considered as appropriate (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). According to Kabeer (2001: 19), empowerment is ‘… the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them’. Thus defined, empowerment is considered to have three dimensions, viz., (1) agency, resources and achievements (Kabeer, 1999; 2001; 2005). Agency, ‘the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them’ (Kabeer, 2001: 21) can be in positive terms as ‘power to’ and in negative terms as ‘power over’ (Kabeer, 2005). The ‘power to’ aspect refers to ‘people’s ability to make and act on their life choices, even in the face of other’s opposition’ and in negative sense of ‘power over’ as ‘… the capacity of some actors to override the agency of others through, for example, the exercise of authority or the use of violence and other forms of coercion’ (Kabeer, 2005: 14). ‘Resources’ refer to the norms, rules and conventions which are distributed through societal institutions (Kabeer, 2001; 2005). Agency and resources constitute ‘people’s capabilities: that is, their potential for living the lives they want. The term ‘achievements’ refers to the extent to which this potential is realised or fails to be realised; that is, to the outcomes of people’s efforts’ (Kabeer, 2005: 15).

In terms of the above conceptualisation, the significance of microfinance for women’s empowerment can be explained in the following terms. Firstly, group meetings are considered to give women the opportunity to share and learn from each other’s individual and collective lives (presumably), helping women develop confidence (Hashemi et al., 1996). Women’s contribution to household expenses and family members’ fear of public exposure has been found to lead to decreased domestic violence (Schuler et al., 1997). Relatedly, financing services are usually complemented by education and gender awareness components, which are also considered as contributor to women’s self-confidence (Amin et al., 1998). Secondly,
group meetings have been found conducive to women’s social and political awareness (Hashemi et al., 1996) and their acceptance of culturally proscribed things such as contraceptives (Schuler et al., 1997). Moreover, as group meetings often take place with the facilitation of the field-staff, their presence facilitates absorption of new ideas and values (Goetz and Gupta, 1996). In cases where the credit-based groups are organised as federations, they provide women with greater spatial and social exposure thus contributing more to their self-confidence and self-worth (Ackerly, 1995). Finally, the training component in microfinance sometimes also involves travelling outside the street or village, thus arguably acting as contributor to women’s development of self-confidence (Montgomery et al., 1996).

Practically, this ‘win-win’ situation has been found to be mediated by a number of factors. Firstly, the ‘degree of control’ over the loans and existing distribution of household resources and responsibilities are the contingent factors in the potential of microfinance for women’s empowerment (Kabeer, 1998): divorced, widowed or separated women might retain almost exclusively control over the loan-use but not the young and the unmarried (Goetz and Gupta, 1996). It has been found that women’s income due to microfinance-based enterprises sometimes lead male members of the household to withhold spending their resources on household expenditure (Rowland, 1997). Secondly, entrepreneurial activities may turn out as additional role for women alongside their traditional household chores (Mosley and Hulme, 1998). It has been also found that the larger the loan-size the more the chances for male members of the household appropriating it for themselves (Ackerly, 1995). In this sense, microcredit may be endangering women in being used as conduits for accessing loans (Montgomery et al., 1996). For instance, according to Ghalib et al. (2015: 85), 50-70% of Pakistani women hand over loans to their male relatives. Moreover, when male borrowers wish to get additional loans,
they force women members of the household to borrow loan. Finally, even if women have power over the use of loans, they have been found to be lacking financial management capacity (see, e.g., Ackerley, 1995: 46-61).

Thus far, the advantages and disadvantages of microfinance have been presented in general terms. The following section presents the analysis of the data collected on the purpose and functioning of a village bank in the LDP project to determine whether or not it was successful in contributing to women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. The section begins with the presentation of a brief history of microfinance in Pakistan following which the process and influencing factors in the evolution of microfinance in RDO are presented.

7.3.1 Microfinance in Pakistan

As microfinance gained international popularity in the 1990s, many Pakistani NGOs also began subscribing to the innovation (Mustafa et al., 2000; Hussein and Hussain, 2003). The stimulus largely came from the World Bank's growing interest in microfinance throughout the poorest regions of Asia and Africa, including Pakistan, for which it approved US$99 million in 1999 (ADB, 2000: 49). Similarly, in 2000 the government of Pakistan established Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), a public-private non-profit company (Khan, 2008) to provide microfinance services to the poor through the NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) (Shirazi and Khan, 2009). PPAF is a financial management organisation, which borrows loan from the World Bank and then lends it on interest to microfinance banks and NGOs. Similarly, as part of its ‘Ten Year Perspective Development Plan (2001-2011)’, the government also announced to extend microfinance to 3 million poor by 2010 (Niethammer et al., 2007). In 2006, there were 0.45 million active

A major reason for the relatively late growth of the sector could be public reservations regarding the ‘interest-based’ loan. Pakistani microfinance organisations charge interest from 20-25% (Haque, 2008: n.p.) to 20-28% (Khuwaja, 2009: n.p.), which is accrued over the lifespan of the loan. This rate is lower than that found in other countries and regions, but the public perception of interest as usury has been a constant factor hindering the spread of the sector throughout Pakistan. There are no recent estimates at the time of writing regarding the extent of negative public perception of interest-based lending in Pakistan but according to a nation-wide household survey of 2240 households in 2 urban and 6 rural communities conducted in 2001, 42.6 % did not apply for micro-credit loans because interest rates were too high while 41.9 % did not ‘… want to pay interest for religious reasons’ (Hussain et al., 2003: 175). The religious reservations regarding interest rate are particularly stronger in Pashtun society (Khan et al., 2007). As RDO also works in the Pashtun-dominant province of the Khyber Paktunkhwa, this aspect of the social structure had particular implications for its microfinance services, which will become evident below.

7.3.2 Microfinance in RDO: Evolution and Innovations

Chapter 5 (p. 126-37) noted that the intervention model of RDO was strongly imitative of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) (Khan, 2009a), which in turn was inspired from the rural development approach of Dr. Akhtar (Khan, 2009a).

30 The Mexican MFB, Compartamos, charge its clients more than 100 % interest rate (Rosenberg, 2007). Similarly, Badan Kredit Desa of Indonesia charge 55 % interest rate while the Bolivian microfinance institution, BancoSol, charge 47.5 – 50.5 % (Morduch, 1999). According to Rosenberg et al. (2013) microfinance institutions in Africa and Latin America charge between 20% to 50% interest rate.
2009b) which he had adapted from Raiffeisen’s credit cooperatives in Germany (Khan, 1976). Since the provision of credit to the poor was one of the core components of the approach, RDO began the service right after its initiation in the 1990s. Similarly, it has been also shown (Chapter 5, p. 136-37) that RDO is a member of the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN). In the 1990s, Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) served 80 % of all the microfinance clients (Rasmussen et al., 2007: 156). Since, other members of RSPN were engaged in microfinance, RDO apparently could not take risk to neglect its provision.

It has been already shown in Chapter 4 that successive governments in Pakistan have not designed policies to serve the citizens, nor have they established effective service-delivery mechanisms. As a consequence of such a consistent neglect by the state, poor people do not have regular access to livelihood. Their livelihood strategies can be described in terms of Gough’s (2004: 33-4) ‘informal security regime’, which ‘... reflects a set of conditions where people rely heavily upon community and family relationships to meet their [livelihood] security needs …’ but these relationships are characterised by ‘... adverse incorporation, whereby poorer people trade some short-term security in return for longer-term vulnerability and dependence’. Keeping this analytical frame in mind, this section seeks to demonstrate that instead of becoming an opportunity for villagers’ poverty alleviation, RDO’s microfinance became a means of their exploitation. RDO’s operations introduced or at least strengthened exploitative elements at the grassroots level. In Gough et al.’s terms (2004), the intervention provided short-term financial security, but introduced long-term vulnerability in their lives.

To substantiate this argument, I will refer extensively to the narrative of the Financial Management Specialist, Mr. Jat (age: 40s). He is being quoted at length because he
had extensive experience in the sector, and his comments are insightful. According to him:

The main challenge that we encountered in the 1990s was that microfinance was very looked down upon by the communities for the reason that interest was involved. Whenever we'd go to the community and we used to tell them that we want to give you a loan through any XYZ mode, the first thing they would ask: there must be interest and if interest is involved [then] Ye Sood Hy Aur Sood Allah Aur Us Ke Rasool Sy Jang Hy [this is usury and usury is tantamount to war with Allah and his Prophet [Muhammad]]. … So, my stance was that since we are getting money on interest, so we have to deliver our interest first and the second is we have to cover our operational costs, so it has to be kind of income from somewhere and interest was the only available option, so we had to take this interest. … The interest was one thing and the delivery mechanism was another thing because we were totally involved in delivering the loans and getting back, so it was a kind of practice which was against the philosophy of RSP. What RSP believes in? RSP believes that the community has the capacity of self-help and all they need is some technical system. If you see the other way around RSPs in microfinance were involved in just delivering the services. In other words, our job was to deliver loans and then take it back and then deliver it again. We were not working for capacity building. This was the status of such kind of microfinance then and back in 2006, we have shifted the old model. … we lost about 25 million [Pakistani] rupees [= £180,000.0] that is 15% of our own disbursed amount when we were doing service-delivery…

Although the interviewee referred to people’s perception of interest as usury only in the 1990s, but as the above-cited survey indicates, a significant number of the population retained this perception even into the early 2000s. There are two interrelated questions in this regard: Firstly, if negative perceptions persisted about microcredit then why did RDO develop a large portfolio of credit services? Secondly, if people perceived interest-based credit as usury then why did they subscribe to RDO to have to default later as Mr. Jat mentioned?

Mr. Jat’s above reflections clearly indicates that RDO expanded the services primarily for commercial purpose of making profits and maintaining good rapport with the donors. The current employees were reluctant to comment regarding
commercialism in RDO but three interviewees alluded to the commercial aspects of the enterprise. Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s), the ex-Project Coordinator, referred to the overall changes in the organisation’s approach as ‘mercantile’ in the following terms:

How much money has got into the organisation? How much has gone out of the organisation as if money has become the sole of purpose of the organisation.

He used the term ‘mercantilism’\(^{31}\) in the sense of commercial tendency in RDO’s microfinance services. In this regard, Hulme and Maitrot’s (2014: 81) following reflections regarding changes in microcredit in Bangladesh are quite relevant.

… the pursuit of organisational goals (a growing loans portfolio with more clients, increasing rates of profit or surplus, the reporting of a high repayment rate, international awards and reputation) through management systems and incentives based purely on individual and branch financial performance [emphasis added] means that client experience is a marginal issue.

The emphasis on ‘performance’ is also clearly discernible in Mr. Jat’s remarks above. The shift towards commercial and neoliberal mode brought in ‘performance management’ systems to set up monthly loan-disbursement and recovery targets. Performance management tools were based on the New Public Management (NPM) reforms of 1980s. NPM was a rational choice-based approach to the public sector administrative reforms, which were introduced in the UK and the US as part of the then governments’ neoliberal agenda. NPM entailed ‘… a shift in emphasis from policy making to management skills, from a stress on process to a stress on output, from orderly hierarchies to an intendedly more competitive basis for providing public services, from fixed to variable pay and from a uniform and inclusive public service to a variant structure with more emphasis on contract provision…’ (Hood, 1995: 95; \(------\)

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\(^{31}\) The term in the original sense referred to the 16\(^{th}\) to 19\(^{th}\) centuries Western European thought and policies wherein they emphasised on restraining imports and encouraging exports ‘… to achieve a “favourable” balance of trade that would bring gold and silver into the country and also to maintain domestic employment’ (LaHaye, 2008: n.p.).
see also Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Gruening, 2001). Although the reforms also 
entailed budgeting and funding to public agencies and NGOs based on their 
performance, the ideas did not directly diffuse into the microfinance sector until its 
commercialisation in the 1990s.

This happened because neoliberal agencies, such as the World Bank, began 
funding NGOs for microfinance and along came the performance measurement. 
This might have been necessary because lending money to the asset-less poor was 
a risk. Moreover, there might have been the probability of loss due to bad loans.

The existence of performance appraisal manuals for documenting aspects, such as 
clients and products, efficiency and productivity, profitability, and asset/liability 
management (CGAP, 1999; Isern et al., 2008) is evidence that the sector has been 
refashioned along the lines of the NPM. The NPM-based credit management 
system, however, encountered problems. The current staff-members were reluctant 
to discuss the strategies they used in convincing community members to apply for 
microcredit loans, but they mentioned how they used to recover loans to meet 
targets. For instance, the credit facilitator, Mr. Daran (age: 30s) remarked

Some needed link road, some needed tube well, some needed hand 
pumps and some asked for trainings. So, we would pressurise them 
in a social way that as long they would not bring loan-recovery we 
could not do anything for them. Then they, out of their own would, run 
after the defaulters.

An ex-Assistant Credit Officer, Mr. Taqdeer (age: 40s), was more open as to how 
the credit officers disbursed and recovered loans.

It was a mess but what could we do? We had quarterly and monthly 
targets for the disbursement of loans and recovery. We would use 
every possible tactic to convince them to get loans. Some would take 
loan for a son’s engagement or marriage, others would apply to repay 
debts [owed to someone] etc. etc. When recovery time came I used 
threats. I felt guilty but I had to demonstrate 100% recovery rate.
The foregoing discussion illustrates only one aspect of the microfinance business in practice, i.e., RDO’s reasons for enrolment in the services and staff-members’ tactics to keep the operations running. The other question raised above (p. 222) regarding the reasons for people’s acceptance of loans despite religious reservations also needs treatment. I turn to this below by elaborating on just one case from district Quore.

According to Mr. Ajeem, the Community Resource Person from village Batang in district Hall:

I don’t remember the amount but a number of my friends from the city of Quore told me that people did not pay back the loans. They used religious verdicts to justify it.

This was confirmed by Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s), stating that

RDO might have had 60% or 90% recovery rate but if you add to it the defaulters then millions of millions were lost. People embezzled all the money. They used fatwa [religious verdict] to justify their immoral action of non-payment as the verdict stated that it was usury and so they embezzled it.

Rural people first borrowed loans and then used proscriptions from the clergy to justify the non-payment to RDO. In other words, they worked the loopholes in the target-based loan-delivery and recovery system to their advantage. The monthly and quarterly targets-based system produced two types of effects. As demonstrated above, for the complying community members, the system operated to provide short-term financial security in return for long-term vulnerability by having to repay the monthly instalments on a loan, which in theory was approved for some entrepreneurial activity but in reality was spent on household consumption in most cases. Secondly, the ‘cleverer’ community members used the microfinance loans
for other than income generating purposes and then used religion in their defence to justify non-repayment of loans.

This being the case, it can be said that RDO not only became neoliberal in running microfinance, but also its front-line staff increasingly behaved in clientelistic ways. That is, instead of assessing appropriately the capacity of the loan applicants and working for their poverty alleviation it made them more economically vulnerable. In Gough’s (2004: 33-4) terms, community members were trading ‘… short-term security in return for longer-term vulnerability and dependence’. RDO’s interaction with community members regarding microfinance is also interpretable in these terms.

In historical institutionalists’ terms, it can be argued that the organisation became entangled in self-reinforcing processes, which can be illustrated as follows. As I have mentioned above, the provision of micro-credit was one of the core elements of RDO’s foundational ideology. In this regard, the organisation suffered from ‘learning effects’ (Pierson, 2000; 2004; Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010) in the sense that, in order to cater for the credit needs of more and more people, the organisation engaged more with donors and hence developed large loan-portfolio through the management innovation of performance based targets for loan delivery and recovery. As such, apparently the organisation did introduce the ‘modern’ or ‘advanced’ system for reaching out to more and more rural poor but this organisational ‘innovation’, entangled RDO in the ‘vicious’ cycle of loan-delivery and loan-recovery. Hence, instead of changing structural causes of poverty and powerlessness, the organisation became the agent of its perpetuation. It does not mean that microfinance was ‘100%’ failure but RDO’s search for alternative system for credit-provision, which would be narrated shortly below, is evidence that on the whole ‘retail’ lending suffered from overwhelming limitations.
As mentioned by Mr. Jat above (p. 222), RDO’s loss of approximately £180,000 triggered a search for innovation in microfinance. Thus in 2006, under the Swiss Development Corporation’s ‘Financial Sector Strengthening Project’, RDO set up 8 ‘Community Managed Rural Finance’ village banks (RDO, n.d.). The banks are set up in ‘… in all those areas where 10 or more women community organisations are willing to form a cluster organisation i.e., Village Organisation (VO)’ (RDO, 2009: 14). There could be two reasons for the almost exclusive focus on women. Firstly, given the general observation that men often used women members of the household to access loans (see, for example, Ghalib et al., 2015; Goetz and Gupta, 1996), microfinance organisations have recently focused more on them. Males’ use of religious proscriptions to justify non-repayment of loans might be taken as an additional reason. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, most of the interventions were directly or indirectly benefiting male community members. According to Mr. Pindaar (age: 30s), the Financial Consultant:

Currently, more than 70% resources are going to males. Schemes approved for women also go to males indirectly because females cannot work in road construction due to cultural constraints. Secondly, there were only fewer female organisations so we thought village banking could help in making female organisations. Donors are also interested in women’s involvement.

The Financial Management Specialist, Mr. Jat (age: 40s), provided the following rationale for the innovation.

If a woman is given an opportunity to earn something, which can ultimately contribute to the income of that particular household, then in the long run probably they will start sending their children to schools rather than putting them in some labour. Ultimately, this will also have [positive] effect on their health. So, basically village banking is not just focused on the financial vulnerability of the poor but also target the child labour issues and child health.
By 2013, 40 village banks were supported with AusAID-funded LDP project (RDO, 2013a). According to the same report, 'the initial amount (PKR 22.46 million \(\approx £164,000\)) provided through AusAID LDP has been circulated by these 40 village banks to generate an additional amount of over 30 million \(\approx £2,201,352\) in almost three years of operations' (RDO, 2013a: 8).

The following section assesses the effectiveness of the innovation in women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation. The section first describes its structure and purpose and then analyses the views of women members of the bank.

7.3.3 Poverty Alleviation and Women’s Empowerment through the Village Banks

Village banks are based on RDO’s Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach ‘…which essentially inculcates community dialogues, willingness of communities, terms of partnerships, and commitment of the target communities to own the project activities (RDO, n.d.-b: 4). If a Village Organisation wishes to graduate to the status of a village bank, RDO signs terms of partnership with it and builds the capacity of its staff through Financial Services Management Training. Each Village Bank is headed by a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson elected by the leadership of its constituent Community Organisations. The bank also hires a local (usually a high school graduate) woman who is trained as Credit Extension Worker (CEW) to look after the day-to-day affairs of the bank. Additionally, each Village Bank has two committees, namely, a social mobilisation committee and a credit committee. The former is meant for forming new Community Organisations of women, while the latter works for overseeing the banking services and the disbursement of funds in equitable manner among all the constituent Community Organisations (COs). It is also mandatory for every bank to open a ‘Community Savings Account’ in a
commercial bank. Members are encouraged to deposit monthly savings regularly in that account to become eligible for loan from the village bank.

In LDP, the bank provided two types of financial services. Firstly, in contrast to the ‘retail’ credit through group-based lending in the older version, the bank charged PKR 1000 to 1500 [≈ £8 to 11] as application fee to avoid the criticism that microcredit was usurious. The service was provided through the PPAF-funded (see p. 219) credit-line. Secondly, with the help of grants-in-aid in LDP, two more interventions of ‘Income Generating Grants (IGG)’ and ‘Community Investment Fund (CIF)/Revolving Fund’ were provided. Additionally, the enterprise section of LDP ran the Enterprise Development Support scheme in the village banks wherein PKR 15,000 (≈ £ 10) was given to the ‘extremely poor’ (RDO, n.d.-b). The bank also nominated women-members for interventions in Natural Resource Management (NRM), enterprise and Human Resource Development (HRD) (see Appendix 8).

In practice, the bank performed somewhat better in providing loan/grants and in nominating members for training. However, interviewees also raised reservations regarding its unequal treatment of the members. On the loan/grant-provision side, almost all the interviewees acknowledged to have received it from the village bank but they raised two issues. Those women who had accessed loan through PPAF-funded scheme raised two complaints. Firstly, some women said that the application-fee of PKR 1000-1500 (≈ £8 to 11) was high and unfair. Others considered it usurious. Secondly, they pointed out that PKR 15,000 – 20,000 (≈ £

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32 In practice, the staff-member and community members often referred to both as CIF, though. Income Generating Grant (IGG) was granted ‘… to extremely poor households (PSC = 0-11) that … [had] … no capacity to generate enough funds to repay loans … [and] … CIF [Community Investment Fund] Revolving Loans … [were] … provided to those households falling under the PSC score of 0 -18’ (RDO, 2011b: 43). Under the IGG, a maximum amount of PKR 5000 [≈ £ 37] was given to the extremely poor households just once, while the Revolving Loan/Fund of PKR 15,000 [≈ £ 110] was given free of charge to members but had to be repaid in regular instalments which would be then given to other deserving applicants.
110 – 145) loan was not enough. Similarly, the Income Generating Grant (IGG) of PKR 5000 (≈ £ 37) per head, which was provided as part of the LDP package, was also deemed insufficient. The staff-members justified the application-fee on the grounds that

VB [Village Bank] has to run its operational cost. RDO provides salary to its staff [members] for the first year but then it generates its operational cost by charging service fee. It is unavoidable.

The second economic function of the bank was to instil financial discipline in the members by asking them to develop the habit of making regular savings. To do this, an applicant for loan had to deposit savings equal to 50% of the monthly instalment of a loan before the application could be processed. That is,

If she gets a loan of [PKR] 12000 [= £ 85], her monthly instalment will be 1200 [= £ 9], so she has to give [PKR] 600 [= £ 4.5] for savings to move her loan application.

--- Mr. Pindaar (age: 30s), Financial Management Specialist

In practice, however, women tended to perceive this practice as a means to access a loan, rather than as a process of developing financial discipline per se. When it was probed if women were really getting profits using the loan, few of them confirmed to have invested it in some business. Moreover, such women complained that the amount was inadequate for running the business. For instance, Ms. Tara (age: 50s), who was in the business of selling fresh milk confirmed, ‘I already had a buffalo. When they gave me the loan, I bought a calf with that. You see the loan amount is not enough to buy a buffalo but it helped me nonetheless’. Another member, Ms. Aruj (age: 30s), was able to monetise the amount of loan she needed:

They [Village Bank staff] give loan from PKR 10,000 [= £73] to PKR 20,000 [= £145]. It is little, I want it to be increased at least to 50,000. But its OK …
Most women reported to have consumed the loan on personal consumption such as paying debt or buying household goods. For instance, the FGD participant, Ms. Juma (age: 40s) explained that she took the loan of, ‘[PKR.] 10,000 [= £73]. You see I have many kids to feed but my husband does not earn enough’. In response to her comments, another participant, Ms. Takseer added that ‘people [in the village] are poor, I mean, most of us. It is not fair to get loan with extra money [i.e., application fee] to pay but what can be done’. From the perspective of some poor members, the ‘extra money’ stopped them from applying to loan altogether. For instance, Ms. Rozi (age: 20s), while lamenting her family’s poverty said, ‘… I have never taken loan. My husband does not feel happy with it. He says that there is usury in it and it is sinful for both its taker and deliverer’.

This aspect of women’s circumstances, which would become clearer below, was also gaugeable from the poor conditions of their households that were observed during the field visits. Those women who had attained training in poultry extension or horticulture appreciated the bank’s cooperation in nominating them. However, they expressed two reservations. Firstly, that the trainings were not held locally in their area because they had domestic responsibility of rearing and caring for dependents. Secondly, they appreciated the content of the trainings but also added that the duration of the training should be increased because they were illiterate, and were therefore slow in picking up things.

Moreover, while most interviewees perceived the bank as means for in-cash and in-kind financial help, they frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the way the bank was functioning. It does not mean that the bank was solely exploitative without

\[\text{33 This is also evidenced from Table 3.2 in Chapter 3 (p. 88).}\]
benefiting anyone but in most cases it did perform inequitably. For instance, Ms. Brishna (age: 30s), who was apparently well-connected to the bank’s leadership, explicitly admitted:

To tell you the truth, I had actually taken loan from the village bank and then these [village bank] people paid my instalments. I mean they waved off those instalments. You see, there are so many poor women but they did not get it and other people got the money. The poor also got it [grant money] but very little, very little.

In comparison to this tacit admission, women who had not received training or a grant were strongly critical of the bank. For instance, Ms. Wajahat (age: 40s) almost stopped visiting the bank because:

One day by chance when I went her [Village Bank president’s] home, some women had come on a visit just like you people have come and they were giving Zakat money. ... in a way they have been living luxuriously in the name of the poor. They have developed themselves, forwarded themselves but they would never let the poor get developed. ... when big officials pay visit, then they get together rich women telling them that they are in the organisation... they don’t inform the poor.

*Zakat* is compulsory religious tithes in Islam and *Khairaat* is voluntary charity.

Although most well-off Pakistanis actively give charity but it is unlikely that they might be giving it through NGOs. There are no latest reports to substantiate this claim but according to report by Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy (PCP), in 2005, Pakistani diaspora in the US gave about US$ 250 million in cash and in kind of which

[1]he largest chunk of overall giving goes directly to individuals in immediate need, rather than to institutions and organized charities. Pakistani diaspora believes that giving directly to the needy and the deserving is superior to institutional giving. Kinship networks of friends and extended family (as opposed to organized charities) play a critical role in this direct giving to needy individuals. This preference is influenced by a striking lack of trust in nonprofit and philanthropic institutions in Pakistan (PCP, 2005: 1-2).
It is, therefore, least likely that Zakat/Khairat could have been distributed through the village bank of RDO. The interviewee probably used the term Zakat to refer to Income Generating Grant which, according to Ms. Gulman (age: 40s), Assistant Credit Officer, is ‘... a one-off grant given to a person and cannot be given repetitively...’. In relation to the point made above, Ms. Maimaar (age: 30s), admitted having received training through the bank, but complained:

They just invite us to listen to them [VB leadership]. Although veterinary doctor comes to vaccinate cattle but I do not have that even. Other people have received poultry etc. but I have not received any benefit except for a training in plant seedlings.

More interestingly, the leadership of some community organisations had altogether stopped participating in the bank’s operations and activities. For instance, the president of a CO, Ms. Hajat (age: 50s) said, ‘I was expecting that I will earn something from it, some salary, some benefit but nothing. What is the use of holding the meetings and do the errands when I am not getting something’. Similarly, Ms. Iman expressed her reluctance to participate,

I participate in [CO] meetings once in a while but their [pointing towards her children] father does not allow me saying that what are its benefits for me. 40, 50 women have been given poultry. Grants come but they are given to rich. ... Look, survey is done in the village by her [the bank’s president]. So, some got [PKR.] 5000 [≈ £36.5], 10000 [≈ £ 73], and that was it for the survey. The bank’s president gives money to whom she likes.

It appears that nepotism in the nomination and selection for grants, loans and trainings was prevalent in the village bank. It is likely that it was purely by chance that only those women were interviewed who had a rather bad experience with the village bank. However, as is discernible from the views of the interviewees quoted above, even those women who received loan/grant also confirmed discrimination in the operations of the village bank.
7.3.4 From ‘Retail’ Lending to the ‘Village Bank’: Implications of the Innovation

This section extends the argument presented in section 7.3.2 to the analysis of the village bank. The bank was established to serve the dual purposes of financial services to women for poverty alleviation and as an institution for collective wellbeing by mobilising them for their own empowerment. In reality, however, it suffered from shortcomings on both sides. On financial services side, the bank mostly replicated the retail model of microfinance. It merely worked as a mechanism for the disbursement and collection of money for ‘poverty alleviation’ irrespective of the question whether creditors invested it in the proposed businesses or not and whether their poverty was alleviated or not. The only difference between the work of RDO and the village bank’s lending was that while RDO generated profit by charging interest on the loan, the village bank charged fixed application fee. It then appears that RDO has merely created institutions that circulate the money coming from the World Bank via PPAF and RDO to the village bank. Similarly, regarding its goal of women’s empowerment through their social mobilisation, it has been shown that the bank’s operations were characterised by nepotism. The functioning of the bank, particularly in relation to the goal of empowerment, is interpretable in terms of Gough et al.’s (2004) schema regarding the processes of exploitation that persist in an ‘informal security regime’. Its operations were akin to the functioning of political parties in Pakistan. Every political party has local constituencies. Each constituency has its local leadership. As I explained in Chapter 4 (p. 111-19), ordinary men and women interact with political party leaders and local councillors ‘… on the principles of reciprocity of relationships and patronage at village level …’ (Malik, 2009: 1005). The functioning of village bank is characterised by such features as well, i.e., in most cases those closely connected to the leadership appeared to easily access
grants, revolving funds, and variety of trainings but those women who had either
difficulty in accessing them or did not have close ties with its leadership were
altogether kept in ignorance about the opportunities.

Most importantly, far from working as an agency for mobilising women to transform
their personal and collective lives, the bank contributed to the development of ill
feelings among women. Partly, this was because it mostly functioned to strengthen
class-based divisions between women. A bank is established when at least 10
community organisations have expressed willingness to graduate as village
organisation and subsequently sign terms of partnership with RDO to work as a hub
for financial services. It is least likely that women in rural areas, who are mostly
illiterate, would have felt empowered and confident ‘enough’ to establish a bank.
However, if we assume that women established it out of a genuinely felt-need, the
empirical data clearly indicates that it largely operated as an instrument of women’s
oppression rather than as a means of their emancipation. This being the case, it
might be also asked if the functioning of non-bank Village Organisations (VOs) and
Local Support Organisations (LSOs) formed in LDP was better. Data regarding this
aspect of the LDP is presented in the following section.

7.4 Towards Collective Action?

It is pertinent to remember that the interventions in microfinance, value chain,
enterprise, community physical infrastructure, and natural resource management
are meant to serve the dual purpose of improving community members’ socio-
economic conditions and to motivate and enable them to use their ‘institutions’
(COs, VOs, LSOs) as ‘… means of local self-government that helps the poor
demonstrate their abilities to recognise opportunities around them’ (RDO, 2013a: 5).
Arguably, the metaphor of path dependence in combination with political economy
approach explains the increasingly ‘mechanical’ practices of RDO. Present structures and behaviour in organisations reflect past developments (Kieser, 1994: 609). As such, it will become evident below that RDO’s expansion in microfinance, humanitarian services and other newer interventions has affected the commitment and performance of its field staff. What Abrams (1980: 7-8) theoretically remarked regarding the relationship of sociology and history is aptly applicable to RDO: ‘[h]ow do we as active subjects make a world of social objects which then, as it were, becomes subjects making us their objects?’ Over the course of its history the management actively embraced the neoliberal interventions of microfinance and more recently value chain. These, presumably, conscious decisions of the top actors in the organisation have, however, put in place structures, which to a large extent are acting upon the management and especially the field-staff to function without an overall clearer organisational goal or aim. To demonstrate the validity of this claim, I will refer to the overall changes in the organisation that negatively impacted field-level activities as well as staff-members’ perception of their work environment.

I participated in two events regarding Natural Resource Management (NRM) training, which suggests that not all community members would be making use of the interventions. Both events, one in district Fall (27/03/2014) and the other in district Gall (06/05/2014), were the conclusion sessions of training for women as Poultry Extension Workers (PEWs). After handing over the poultry to the trainees, the officer requested them not to sell those and to keep and breed them further to have a regular source of income. It appears that after working for more than two decades in these towns, RDO still faces the perpetual challenge of changing people’s attitudes to utilise trainings and grants for their long-term development rather than treating them as welfare or charity items. Moreover, if trainings, grants
and other items are not used for their intended purpose, then a bigger challenge is to instil attitude change through Community Organisations (COs), Village Organisations (VOs) and Local Support Organisations (LSOs), quite a large number of which were established in the LDP. According to the data in Table 7.3 (below) during the lifespan of three and a half years of LDP, 349 men’s Community Organisations and 213 Women’s Community Organisations were formed. That is, each year, about 87 and 54 Community Organisations were formed for men and women, respectively. Similarly, 64 male Village Organisations (VOs) and 34 women VOs were formed in the project, which means that on average 16 and 9 VOs for males and females were formed each year, respectively. Additionally, all the male VOs were federated into 10 Local Support Organisations (LSOs), i.e., 10 out of the 18 target Union Councils had LSOs by the end of the project period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organisation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Male Community Organisations (MCOs)</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Male Village Organisations (MVOs)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Women Community Organisations (WCOs)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of WVO formed</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of COs Federated into VOs</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total VOs</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of LSOs formed</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of VOs federated into LSOs</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** RDO (2013b: 7-8)

According to the original practices of the ‘Rural Support Programme (RSP)’, a social organiser is supposed to hold a number of dialogues with community members to form community organisations. Moreover, it would take a social organiser at least
many weeks, if not months, to initiate the process of dialogues with a community. Keeping this in perspective, it becomes pertinent to explore as to why and how did LDP-staff organise so many COs, VOs, and LSOs.

The field-staff acknowledged the difficulty in keeping community ‘institutions’ of COs, VOs, and LSOs ‘alive’ once the interventions were delivered. They gave variety of explanation for their speedy performance. According to Mr. Daaman (age: 30s), the community specialist,

the nature [emphasis added] of the community is unpredictable. It is not the formula of maths where 2+2 = 4. When their needs are being fulfilled, they work with you and also cooperate and your activity is also going smoothly. But when their needs or requirements are getting minimal attention, then they also lose interest.

As the word ‘nature’ suggests that gauging a community’s interests and convincing it to think beyond its immediate needs is difficult. As such, the issue is not unique to RDO. This, however, does not fully explain change in RDO’s interventions such as the adoption of poverty scorecard, the establishment of village banks, the implementation of value chain and above all the practice of hasty formation of grassroots organisations.

As a consequence of organisational expansion, the top management is either ignorant of field-level problems and issues in a project like LDP or it does not seem to have time for overseeing field-level problems and thus, in a way, deliberately ignore them. Take, for instance, the evidence that at middle-management level, i.e., at the level of the ‘Project Support Unit (PSU)’, there were Programme Officers (POs) for each sector intervention, but none for steering the ‘social organisation units’ in the three field offices. Both male and female social organisers raised this issue complaining that while the field-staff of other sections had POs for guidance and help but they (social organisers) did not have a Programme Officers PO for the
purpose. Owing to this apparent neglect, the social organisers in the field units were either unclear about the process and purpose of three-tiered social mobilisation or had so many job requirements that they could not focus on social mobilisation. For instance, Mr. Cheema (age: 30s; social organiser) stated that ‘we try to graduate COs to LSO in one year’, which stands in contrast to past practices when it would take months in the conduction of the ‘three dialogues’ as discussed in Chapter 5 (p. 141-45).

In addition to the lack of experience, the tendency to graduate COs to LSO in one year also emanated from the social organisers' negative perception of the work environment and mutual blaming between social organisers and other field officers. Field officers from other sections complained that social organisers were not doing their duties properly. For instance, when asked if there was higher potentiality of dormancy in COs, VOs, LSOs, Mr. Dastoor (age: 30s), a Community Protocol Officer complained that

> When the social organisers initially go to the communities, they make many promises, which we cannot fulfil. I do not mean that we lie. We communicate all those interventions that are in the project but every intervention is not for every CO.

Similarly, Mr. Gulman (age: 40s), who was working as Assistant Credit Officer, complained that

> I had to meet my targets of credit disbursement. You would not believe I had to mobilise women myself and form [women's] community organisations. I do not think there is much focus on social mobilisation.

In contrast to this, however, Ms. Rumi (age: 30s), Social Organiser, complained that:
Four FSOs [female social organisers] came and left before me. Why? Low salary, no training and lots of expectations by the other sections. I tell you what? When an activity is accomplished successfully, the concerned section takes all the credit but if it fails then [social] mobilisation team is blamed.

Simultaneously, Mr. Cheema (Social Organiser), who was standing by when Ms. Rumi made the above remarks, said with apparent emotion:

You see, a social organiser is like a bull terrier: it is tied to a rope, when not required; when required, it is unloosed and asked, catch it!34

In the working environment of mutual blaming and the relative neglect from the management to assess the social organisers’ competence and commitment to field activities, the innovation of three-tiered social mobilisation took on a rather mechanical form. As noted in Chapter 5 (p. 145-50), under the ‘coordination effect’ from Rural Support Programme Network, RDO introduced the role of ‘Community Resource Person (CRP)’. The CRPs do operate as ‘extended arms’ of RDO who are perpetually present in the community and hence, presumably, people and the organisation are virtually in constant contact. However, the change contributed towards communication gap between the field officers, particularly, social organisers and the community members. This is evident from the speedy formation of COs, VOs, and LSOs through the CRPs. Consider, for example, Mr. Bajang’s (age: 30s) narrative, who had been working as CRP for quite some time:

They Social Organisers in LDP told me that I had to select people for [community] organisation whose poverty score was between 0 and 23. I made four photocopies of that form and went to a leader of Khadim Mohallah [i.e. street], Mr. Haji. I informed him about the program and requested him to make Community Organisation. I told him that village would be united this way. There would be a bank account in which village savings will be deposited.

34 The metaphor of ‘dog’ is often used in derogatory terms because, culturally, dogs are considered to be unclean, suitable only for fights or household security.
Similarly, Mr. Taqweem (age: 30s), a CRP, while expressing reservation that trainings were often imposed by the LDP staff, inadvertently narrated.

The Human Resources Development section of LDP phoned me. They wanted to train females on clothe-dyeing, so I should send some females. I agreed.

It is clearly evident from the above comments that the field-staff manages activities remotely through telephonic communications with community activists/CRPs. It does not mean that this would be the case everywhere and at all times, but the observations from the field suggest that where a field officer could manage, s/he would make use of connections in the community rather than going to the community him/herself and hold meetings to assess their willingness to organise and subsequently nominated candidates for trainings such as clothe-dyeing. For instance, on 11th May 2014, just before interviewing Mr. Garam (age: 20s), a Social Organiser in LDP, he informed me that a training session was being held at their office that day, but attendance of the community members was not requisite. While he was saying this, Mr. Cheema (another social organiser), came in and rather angrily told him to go to village Kald to tell that thankless CRP to please send some people for the training. He is not picking up the phone!

This demonstrates that just like RDO’s innovation in needs assessment through the poverty scorecard and microfinance, the innovation of three-tiered social mobilisation did not have the desired effects in LDP either. Furthermore, RDO made the ‘conscious’ decisions to adopt these innovations, either out of the reasons for organisational survival, funders’ pressures, coordination effect from other NGOs including RSPN, or a combination of these. In LDP, the processes emerging in the wake of innovations arguably acted on the organisation in ways that it could not
effectively work towards its aims. This brings up the question about the effects of historical and political economy developments that might have influenced the organisational procedures and practices of RDO and the implications of the influences particularly for it and relatively widely for NGOs in the agenda for bottom up change.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the ‘Livelihood Development Programme (LDP)’, which was funded by the Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID). It presented an analysis of the three innovations, which RDO implemented in the project, namely, Poverty Scorecard, rural village bank for women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation, and the formation of the three-tiered community level structures. It was found that although, on the whole, the community members were happy with the tangible effects of most of the interventions, they expressed reservations about the Poverty Scorecard. It was shown that the limitations of the tool derived from the administrative oversights during the process of conducting the survey quickly; most importantly, it was found that although the tool was adopted to address the deficiencies of the tool, which RDO used earlier, i.e., the participatory poverty assessment, but the new tool also suffered from the methodological limitations of assuming equal distribution of and access to household resources thus making it, especially, gender blind to the analysis of the intra-household circumstances. Similarly, the chapter also found that RDO’s provision of microfinance services, though, part of its original foundational aims became more neoliberal as it switched using the intervention to recover money to earn profits. Similarly, its relatively recent innovation of women-only microfinance through the village banks was found to be neither operating democratically nor entirely working for poverty alleviation. Although women did get opportunities for empowerment through training, overall
both in its financial and empowerment functions, the bank was found to be operating clientelistically. Instead of working to create democratisation and bottom up social and financial empowerment, the innovation mostly operated in clientelist ways. The chapter findings also suggested that RDO expanded to implement newer interventions, but it also introduced clientelist tendencies in its operations. This was suggested to be the case in the formation of the three-tiered structures of Community Organisations, Village Organisations and the Local Support Organisations, which was the overall goal of the project as well as the organisation. It was found that, because of negligence of the management, the social organisers felt neither committed to their jobs nor did they have morale high ‘enough’ to engage proactively in the formation of these bodies. In order to assess the validity of these findings, the next chapter explores the historical and political economy factors that might have been influencing the organisation in significant ways.
Chapter 8 – Between Past & Present: Implications of Historical and Political Economy influences

8.0 Introduction

In the preceding two chapters, it has been argued that RDO performs effectively in delivering physical infrastructure schemes and the distribution of goods, such as agricultural items, grants, poultry etc. However, its goal of providing ‘social guidance’ to poor people by organising them to work collectively and democratically for their own development and the development of their localities is less apparent. The evidence presented in the previous two chapters indicated that its interventions have been either explicitly neoliberal, through particular forms of microfinance, or encouraged the commercialisation of farming away from staple food production to the production of cash crops. Moreover, instead of operating democratically for the empowerment of its members, its village level bodies predominantly operate on the basis of favouritism and nepotism. The present chapter seeks to synthesise the findings from the previous data chapters to analyse the factors and issues that RDO has been facing since its inception. It also explores the reasons for these findings. The chapter specifically addresses the following question.

What have been the implications of community social structure, politico-economic environment and donors for RDO’s potential as change agent?

The chapter is divided into three sections to address the above question. The first section provides an historical analysis of the RDO’s practices for organising rural people in viable and effective community organisations. Originally, the CO-formation process of RDO was supposed to achieve economies of scale, the description and
logic for which was spelled out clearly in the foundational document of RDO. The document states that, since government cannot reach out to a large number of small farmers due to managerial and financial constraints, RDO would form farmers’ organisations (i.e., community organisations) for ‘…effective and cost-efficient mechanisms for government agencies to reach small farmers [emphasis original]’ because ‘… farmer organisation conveys economies of scale [emphasis original] to small farmers in purchasing, selling and transporting inputs and produce, and in the division of labour through specialisation in services’ (RDO, n.d.: 2). Keeping this in perspective, the section closely examines RDO’s management structure and its practices to both determine their effectiveness and to explore challenges it might have previously faced. It particularly analyses the influence of the community cultural values and norms on RDO’s goal for establishing grassroots organisations. Thus, the analysis helps in determining whether its interventions were path-breaking or path dependent. Building on this, the second section analyses RDO’s past and current successes in intervention delivery for the purpose of determining their implications both for the organisation and for the rural communities. In particular, it analyses the socialising effect of RDO on community members to determine if its interventions have closed the gap between citizens and state agencies. In this regard, it refers to the immediate interactional context between field-staff and community members and the implications of such interaction for RDO’s vision for social change. The final section takes into consideration the analysis of the broader institutional environment of NGOs and the macro political economic factors to gauge an understanding of the extent to which they have influenced RDO’s practices. It analyses two closely related aspects: changes in the organisation’s aims and objectives as well as changes in its organisational environment. Related to this, it considers the influence of changes that have been taking place in the post-9/11 context of increasing aid flow to NGOs in sensitive regions.
8.1 The Weight of History

This section presents an in-depth descriptive-exploratory account of RDO’s past practices in relation to its efforts for bringing attitude change amongst the rural poor. The purpose of such changes was that they could work collectively as self-help groups to seek assistance from the government and non-governmental agencies. The section also presents an analysis of the challenges and dilemmas that RDO faced to achieve its objectives. It will be shown below that the historically and socially constructed structures of inequality, conflicts, or power struggle at the community level could not be ‘transformed’ through innovative schemes and community development initiatives, though both the field-staff and the management worked with an ‘esprit de corps’. It will be argued that even when RDO had a strong field-oriented management structure and practices, it had limited ability to achieve ‘economies of scale’ through its ‘social guidance’ approach due to the ‘conjectural’ effects (Pierson, 2004) of micro and macro level processes. It refers to the intersection of two or more prior relatively autonomous processes (Aminzade, 1992: 467), which have contingent effect on subsequent outcomes (Mahoney, 2000: 527). Keeping this in view, it will be argued that, in cases where it helped the villagers achieve ‘economies of scale’ through the interventions, the effects were often temporary. This is because it could not fully acknowledge and intervene effectively in village-level processes, such as power-struggles between rival groups. Moreover, following the Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach, it also did not have a clear vision regarding how it would achieve its primary goals.

RDO was conceived to initially work in the two districts of Walle and Jalle (RDO, n.d.). It was supposed to work for the ‘programme’ of ‘rural support’. Its administrative and management structure was designed to be community-oriented. A three-tiered management structure was established: at the top was the head
office, below which were the ‘regional’ offices of Walle and Jalle. Each regional office had field offices, called ‘social organisation unit (SOU)’, which had full authority in scheduling the timing and specifications of interventions in close collaboration with community members.

At the SOU level, social organisers were particularly central to the success of RDO’s agenda. Since they were the frontline workers in initiating and maintaining links with the poor, their concerns and views were seriously considered while authorising physical infrastructure scheme for a community or selecting members for trainings in agriculture, livestock etc. The ex-Project Coordinator, Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s), who had worked in a number of nationally renowned NGOs, including his more than 12 years of service in RDO, reflected that ‘SO [Social Organiser] was the strongest person in terms of programme implementation, programme monitoring and social mobilisation because things were based on whatever [s/]he said, whatever [s/]he recommended’. Moreover, while criticising the present management structure and style, he highly praised the field-oriented organisational structure in the following terms.

Management style was different at that time. That is still there but is no more effective. See, we had a head office and below it were our regional offices. Like Walle district had a regional office, Jalle district regional office. ... So, you see you had management, then you had a regional management below which you had field offices the number of which depended on the number of districts in a region. Back then you had a management which was very well-related and well-connected and was really excellent in coordination and collaboration. And in those times regular monthly meetings were held at each level. Two or three persons from regional office would participate in the meetings at field offices.\(^35\)

\(^{35}\) This is actually quite a long comment. Verbatim transcription would occupy too much space.
In alignment with a strong focus on field offices and the strong weight given to the views and opinions of the social organiser, RDO had also evolved a strong learning-oriented culture with particular emphasis on social mobilisation. Despite the time-bound, project-based nature of the interventions, the organisation did not as readily subscribe to funders’ terms and conditions as was found in the analysis of the microfinance (Chapter 7, p. 219-235) and The Agridevelopment Project (Chapter 6, p. 164-97). In addition to focusing on field-staff, particularly social organisers, all other staff-members of the organisation were also thoroughly educated and sensitised to have this baby of social mobilisation no matter whether you are an engineer or in Human Resource Development, enterprise or credit, you had this thing in, built-in within you. There were more capacity building trainings and they were very clear on it. We would tell donors do this or we won’t do it.

--- Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), Management Coordinator

Thus, in alignment with its original framework for social change, the organisation clearly Advised the Social Organisers not to give any physical infrastructure scheme to a Community Organisation younger than six months. You would have to look at the savings, contributions etc. These were maturity level indicators.

--- Mr. Manzoom (age: 40s), ex-Social Organiser

Similarly, reflecting on his earlier work experience, the Team Leader, Mr. Dardmand (age: 40s), confirmed the same, narrating that ‘… if someone was getting [PKR] 10,000 [= £64] in RDO and he would be offered [PKR.] 20,000 [= £128] in other place, he would not leave RDO because it had a very good environment. Here, the employees were fewer in number and had good atmosphere. Secondly, it was
based on social mobilisation and was non-profit organisation [emphasis added]. It was an institute’. The notion of ‘institute’ echoes Mr. Nashir’s comment on the social mobilisation-oriented approach of all the staff-members. Mr. Dardmand’s reference to the ‘non-profit’ aspect of RDO is also revealing about changes in organisational outlook, to which I will return in the next section below. More importantly, these processes were based on and effectively contributed to the development of a close, collaborative relationship with the communities. For instance, Mr. Dardmand (age: 40s), narrated:

Once our microcredit loan stuck somewhere with community members. An activist said, ‘it is my responsibility to recover that’. He took those people to agriculture bank of the government and forced them to get loan from it. He was standing in the doorway of the bank. We were also with him. So he would take money from those who would get loans and pay that to RDO. He would say that the agriculture bank and the person should now settle issues among themselves. Like, it was a team-work of community and RDO. Now that thing is not here.

Despite the team-based, field-oriented approach and development of friendly relationships with the communities, though, transforming or significantly influencing rural social structure was a challenge for the organisation.

The outcomes of RDO’s success in collaboratively and participatively designing solutions to people’s problems were almost always short lived. Mr. Faraan (age: 40s) quite explicitly admitted this challenge. He narrated the story of a scheme in a village in district Walle of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to Mr. Faraan,

We do water supply scheme on this assumption that this will be sustainable till doomsday, which is totally unrealistic and illogical. We did water supply and irrigation schemes in a village Babu and people for the first time saw vegetables [grown] there and that were very tasty because that was very saltish area. Also fish farm was made. About 10 acres of land was made farmable. We installed water pumps due to which two persons got job, one was operator and the other was mechanic. Women would get water at their homes. We visited that place after two years, only water was there. There were
many reasons. [1] One reason was that the persons who got the job there, their cousins became their enemies. [2] People would go at night and stole fish. [3] Fuel rates [prices] increased so people stopped irrigating their fields.

Apparently, RDO exited the area with the assumption that, as the intervention created opportunities for jobs, farming and provided clean drinking water, people would be cooperatively making use of the facility. Obviously, the issues involved in such a scheme were more than ‘… trying to bring about behavioural change in an environment characterised by farmer expectations of grants and subsidies’ (RDO, n.d.: 21). In addition to the problem of educating farmers to think beyond subsidies and grants, RDO also did not have the time and resources to appropriately analyse local power dynamics in villages. Take, for instance, the first reason from the statement above. As has been discussed in Chapter 5 (p. 130-32) Pashtuns entertain strong in-group loyalties, but the relationship between blood relatives is also characterised by the element of competition that sometimes hinges on conflict when one family out of the extended network of families excels politically or economically. Although, perhaps for the consumption of the Western audiences (Marsden and Hopkins, 2013), Pashtuns have been valorised for their ‘tribal’ war-like behaviour (c.f. Caroe, 1983 [1958]), nonetheless for the purpose of the argument being developed here, it can be said that despite working for more than two decades, it could not significantly alter the centuries old institution of Pashtunwali and primordial loyalties even in the district of Walle where it first began operations after establishment.

Planned social change, whether undertaken by a government agency or an NGO, is subject to influences from the wider institutional environment (Mosse, 1998). ‘… [I]nteracting in one way or another with the systems and structures which determine the distribution of power and resources’ (Edwards, 1994: 292) is especially a
constant challenge for NGOs (Lewis, 2003). In the above vignette, the intervention had short-term effects primarily due to local ethnicity-based and power conflicts about which Banfield’s (1958) hypothesis regarding peasant economic conditions seems appropriate to cite. According to him (1958), peasant societies with low technological development and low economic productivity are characterised by an ethos of ‘amoral familism’ wherein individuals’ calculations are dictated by their loyalty to the family; formal rule-based transactions of politics or markets are relegated to a secondary position. In his words, ‘[i]n a society of amoral familists only officials will concern themselves with public affairs, for only they are paid to do so. For a private citizen to take a serious interest in a public problem will be regarded as abnormal and even improper’ (Banfield, 1958: 85). In absolute terms, this argument might be questioned, especially for its emphasis on considering individuals as completely averse to public good. It, nonetheless, seems applicable to historically structured inequalities in Pashtun society. Additionally, patronage-based mechanisms prevalent in formal political environment overlap with micro social structure to make the situation more problematic for bottom up change. According to Thachil (2009: 473), ‘the development of a clientelistic political system in India and Pakistan has created incentives for policymakers to be more concerned with ensuring continued patronage flows to their elite supporters during reform’. Keeping this in mind along with the analysis presented in Chapter 4 (p. 111-19), it can be said that rural Pashtuns do not just exhibit ‘amoral familism’ merely out of poverty and lack of resources, the patronage-based practices in formal politics have also socialised them to behave clientelistically.

For RDO, tackling the above aspects of the community dynamics through education and sensitisation meetings required long-term investment of time and resources than it could afford. Moreover, tackling such dynamics on case-by-case basis was
also beyond the capacity of RDO. Thus, if the historically and socially constructed values system and normative structures resurfaced in the course of about two years, then RDO’s vision, as well as practice for long-term social change, was that of providing a temporary solution at best. Similarly, even if RDO could have managed the micro-level issues, such as Tarboonwali, it was obviously beyond its scope to foresee and appropriately account for the contingent factor of fluctuations in fuel prices.

Thus, in terms of Pierson’s (2004) notion of conjectural effects of events and processes, it can be argued that the self-reinforcing processes of ‘amoral familism’ at the micro level and the reinforcement of preference for personal benefits over public benefit by the political culture could not allow RDO to leave a long-lasting impact on villagers’ lives.

It also needs mentioning that issues, such as the third factor in the vignette above, are not peculiar to RDO alone. In Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, I have referred to researches from other countries and regions, such as India (Sahoo, 2013), Bangladesh (Devine, 2003), Latin America (Gideon, 1998; Pearce, 2010) and West Africa (Kiggins and Erikson, 2013) where NGOs’ interventions have been found as limited in affecting a relatively lasting change. For instance, according to Kiggins and Erikson’s (2013), NGOs’ provision of food to poor children in a West African community food centre was not a sustainable solution because the causes and consequences of food poverty arose from economic inequalities, which were largely determined by global economic inequalities. In other words, ‘… just as development does not trickle down from the top, pushed by the state alone, it cannot effervesce from the bottom initiated by NGOs alone’ (Sanyal, 1997: 31).
From this it would appear that RDO should not be criticised because it could not control the surge in the price of petroleum as it was beyond its capacities and control. We might follow the hope expressed by Wood and Shakil (2006) regarding the functioning of Village Organisations (VOs) formed by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP). According to them,

... if new, highly desired resources are created (such as micro-hydel sourced electricity) under conditions where resource-hopping to other forms of energy is effectively denied, forms of collection action can re-emerge even from communities which had strategically formed VOs to access PPIs [Productive Physical Infrastructures] and then abandoned them as irrelevant to their needs (Wood and Shakil, 2006: 403).

However, there is problem in this. If most village organisations are formed as shifting alliances of personal or temporary tangible interests, then it is wastage of resources as well as completely in contrast to the central goal of RSP-based organisation. Moreover, it also might also have the negative effects of politically desensitising communities further in the sense that they would not think or act for a change beyond their personal good or at the most beyond the neighbourhood (Settle, 2011).

My research also suggests that, in addition to the challenge of managing multiple factors at micro-level, RDO could not also appropriately organise rural poor on a relatively sustainable basis because the management was never entirely clear about its ‘social guidance’ role. In this regard, it seems appropriate to refer to the foundational document, which suggested that RDO

... should not be held hostage to the historical under-development of local government and local finance, and the government’s evolving policy on local government. In the long run, however, the local government system and broad-based village institutions organised under RDO may become complementary to each other (RDO, n.d.: 6).
As was evidenced above, RDO experimented successfully in introducing innovative solutions to local problems of resource scarcity, agricultural development, poverty alleviation etc. Yet, the problem to mobilise communities along the platform as suggested in the foundational document was arguably not clear to the management. RDO had, at the time the fieldwork was conducted, only limited efficacy in the formation and functioning of Community Organisations (Chapter 7, p. 235-42).

However, even when it was successful in forming some viable community organisations at the best of its performance during the 1990s, it did not have a clear road map for the ultimate shape or functioning that such village-level bodies would take after its exit. In this regard, Mr. Imtihaan (age: 40s), who had served the organisation as Natural Resource Management (NRM) Officer until 2002, reflected on this matter quite articulately. He proverbially remarked:

> There is a dilemma, which I also discussed with Mr. Khalil [a top manager of RDO in the late 1990s] *Che munga y thooth ta domra baraa wakhijao che ghar ta y wakhajao kho de na pas pe munga na pohego che munga ba pe sa kao!* [when we take the community organisations to the mulberry tree-top even beyond that to the top of the mountain but after that we do not understand what would we do with them!]

In *Pashtu* language, the proverbial reference to the ‘mulberry tree-top’ is often used in dichotomous terms to refer to something which has been mishandled or which is hard to achieve or realise. In a nutshell, despite the strong field-oriented focus and commitment of the management and the field-staff, the challenge posed by non-clarity or difficulty to achieve its foundational goals, along with the challenge to appropriately analyse community dynamics, could not allow RDO to make a long-lasting change in the lives of the poor. More importantly, in addition to these limitations, it has always had the dilemma of unavoidably becoming a ‘parallel

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36 The actual proverb is often stated as *Thooh ta Okhatu*, meaning ‘it has climbed up/reached to mulberry top’ or ‘*Thooh ta Laru*’, meaning ‘it has reached the top of mulberry tree’. 
government’. This aspect of the outcome of its interventions is discussed in detail below.

8.2 Assuming a State-within-a-state Role

This section adds to the analysis presented in the preceding section to argue that, while the organisation had limited success in transforming micro social structures, the implementation of interventions and the process of staff-members’ interaction with the communities always had the unintended effects of considerably undermining citizens’ trust in the government’s efficacy. To validly substantiate the claim, the section presents data regarding RDO’s practices in the past as well as in the current circumstances.

It should be reiterated that, just like other community development NGOs, RDO was not supposed to replace, compete with or undermine government agencies. Instead, as the ‘rural support’ in its name suggests, in the absence of viable local government, it was meant to support people to be articulate in accessing government agencies and non-governmental agencies in order to receive various services. This is evidenced by its operational strategy presented in Chapter 5 (p. 141-50) and from the above-quoted passage found in its foundational document. In Salamon’s (1994: 109) terms, NGOs, including RDO, were ‘global associational revolution’, which were supposed to transform micro structures characterised by inequalities and patronage-based mechanisms (Wood, 1997) in a country like Pakistan. The empirical data, however, suggest that RDO constantly faced the challenge to strike a balance between its ‘supporting’ role versus assuming the role as a state-within-a-state.

RDO began filling in the space between the citizens and the state. Both during the process of interaction and the delivery of interventions, the social organisers and
other field-staff of RDO could not avoid eroding citizens’ trust in state agencies. Even if the field-staff did not deliberately refer to the deficiencies in state agencies for the purpose of mobilising communities, the mere provision of services to the people and their frequent interaction with community members could potentially institutionalise anti-state sentiments.

Although most staff-members did not admit that RDO’s operations consistently undermined state agencies in the past or in the present, the data suggest that this has been a constant challenge. For instance, as part of its intervention strategy, RDO regularly arranges ‘managers’ conferences’ at the community level wherein field officers from the government line departments, e.g., education, livestock, horticulture, are invited to participate and inform community members about the services they provide. Similarly, it also engages government officials in training community members, which also discursively add to RDO’s goal of linkages development and enhancement of people’s knowledge about the purpose and functions of the government departments. This aspect of RDO’s work became evident in training arranged for the farmers in the The Agridevelopment Project (Chapter 6, p. 172-83). An official from the agricultural extension department of the government trained the Farmer Enterprise Groups (FEGs) in seed-germination and its transplantation into the farms. Additionally, the official also informed the participants about the types of services the agricultural office offered. Such activities did have positive outcomes. For instance, during the fieldwork, I met a number of community activists and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who, after receiving capacity development training, had worked as consultants for farmers in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan. However, the mere fact that a government official has been ‘invited’ by RDO to an activity (training or managers’ conference) would germinate pro-RDO and anti-state sentiments. This unconscious socialisation of
poor people against the state has already been pointed out in Chapter 5 (p. 153-56) where farmers were quoted to have said that ‘the Pakistani government do not pay unemployment bonus to unemployed people like other countries do. People should not talk against USA’ and that ‘NGOs like RDO, RAHA or ASF directly go the community and solve their problems’. According to Mr. Imtihaan (age: 40s), the ex-NRM officer, the Rural Support Programme (RSP) is ‘a very rigorous approach in terms of social mobilisation but by the end of the day it becomes a parallel government’. Other staff-members also echoed RDO’s potential impact to operate as ‘parallel government’, though none admitted it to be its intentions. For instance, Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), the Management Coordinator, reflected on his experience of the practice of social organisation in 1998/99 thus:

The whole district Mall agriculture officer has [PKR.] one lac [= £ 720] budget for one year. This is reality. We use to tell them like this when we were working in the field as SOs [social organisers]. We would tell them, ‘government can’t come to you and you have to do things by organising yourself and if you need some kind of support we would help you. If you want to improve your agriculture breed, we will help you by bringing a person. We will also support you by bringing you GMOs’. Government has opened institutes to support government but no such things happen here. Agriculture and veterinary officer don’t come out of their offices. They had never done a vaccination camp. They only care about air condition in their cars. They don’t have the resources even if they want to work. Good people in line agencies [agriculture, education, forest etc.] come to us and say that they want to work but they don’t have the money.

A few staff members explicitly admitted that the erosion of citizen trust in the government might be the issue, but they pointed out donors and NGOs in general to be responsible for this. For instance, Mr. Naqvy (age: 30s), the Funds Manager, was more explicit on the subject. When I shared with him that farmers in The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) appreciated RDO for providing them with agricultural goods and criticised the government, he rather emotionally stated:
You may agree or not but NGOs and donor system is a parallel system to governments. UN and all other NGOs tell the community at the start of every activity [that] they are doing this because government is unable to do it. They are trying to finish people’s trust in the government.

Approaches to social change could vary, but the common feature to all of them is seeking to change existing power relationships (Pearce, 2010). If RDO had organised a considerable number of rural communities to remain intact or proactively seek the constitutionally guaranteed services from the government, then, in the wake of RDO’s interaction with them, the erosion of trust in government would not have been problematic. Rather, it would have been potentially positive as rural communities would have been accessing government departments for services. The issue is that as RDO expanded, it mostly operated to provide ‘tangible’ goods, such as poultry, seeds, plants etc. to the communities. It should also be highlighted that, although local government (Zaidi, 2005) and other public service departments in Pakistan (Robinson and Nadvi, 2004) have been mostly dysfunctional, the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies (Ahmed and Khan, 2009) and programmes based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) (see, for example, IMF, 2010) have further constrained the government in terms of resources. Simultaneously, as part of the same Washington consensus-based policies, NGOs like AKRSP (Settle, 2011; see, Brinkerhoff, 2003 for other instances) in Pakistan have been partnering government to provide various services. This means that the ‘... depoliticisation and professionalisation of community-based NGOs when located within the broader structural context of neoliberal economics suggests that … we see the privatisation of public good’ (Kamat, 2004: 170). By engaging more in services delivery, RDO has not only gradually defocused from its goal of democratisation but also it created ‘organised dependency’ as Sahoo (2013: 271; see also, for example, Abom, 2004 on Guatemalan NGOs) has argued
regarding his analysis of an NGO in Southern Rajasthan in India. I also kept in view the following observation regarding the implications of AKRPS’ operations:

... a shift to empowering entrepreneurial community-level institutions while at the same time decapacitating the institution of national government shifts power away from the traditional arena of political participation and democratic contestation, replacing it with unaccountable and unrepresentative organisational structures (Settle, 2011: 401).

When I slightly modified this argument and asked the Community Liaison Officer, Ms. Aruj (age: 50s), if the Local Support Organisations formed by the RDO and other Rural Support Organisations in Pakistan might not become dormant or hijacked by some community leaders, she rather indignantly replied:

What are you talking about to my mind is not a study of LSOs, it is a study of humanity. That is how human beings are and we can’t work with the system of angels or something apart from them. We have to work in a given context. It will happen that some of it will be hijacked. It will happen that someone would steal. I am not saying that we have a hundred per cent success story.

The justification is valid in that it would be unrealistic to expect RDO or any other NGO to demonstrate hundred per cent performance. However, keeping in view the fact that the organisation is currently operating in a large number of districts in Pakistan, there are fewer chances that its fieldworkers would be sensitive to the ‘human’ factor in the formation of Community Organisations (COs), Village Organisations (VOs), or Local Support Organisations (LSOs). There is higher probability for RDO to form ‘... unaccountable and unrepresentative organisational structures’ (Settle, 2011: 401). The claim also holds ground because, in post 2000s aid regime in Pakistan, RDO has been influenced by factors, some of which emerged in the process of the decisions taken by the management. Other factors have been coming from the changes in the politico-economic context. I will discuss these in the following section.
8.3 The Possibility of Path Dependence

In the preceding section, it has been argued that, instead of significantly altering the self-reinforcing nature of the community social structure, RDO’s engagement with the communities had the inverse effect of ‘reinforcing’ anti-state sentiments. This, over the course of organisational expansion, has become more pronounced. This section advances the analysis to the post-2000s context of RDO’s operations to argue that its subscription to the neoliberal sectors of microfinance and value chain, along with its engagement in humanitarian services, has made it altogether more difficult for RDO to work according to its original aims and objectives. As will be shown below, rather than actively working towards its goals, RDO has become the ‘object of the subjects’ (Abrams, 1980: 7-8), some of which it adopted during its evolution, e.g., the three-tiered social mobilisation. Others, however, came from the ‘external’ environment after changes in the aid regime in post-9/11 context.

Historical institutionalists argue that ‘… disrupting events – interaction with the initial choice – inducing a path changes the nature and relative importance of distinct initial conditions and thereby their (possible) effect on actions taken’ (Van Driel, 2013: 247-8). For instance, with regard to their analysis of Environmental NGOs (ENGOs) in South Korea, Ju and Tang (2011) noted that they recalibrated and changed their functions to suit their agendas according to changes in the broader institutional, particularly political, environment. Such a process of ‘recalibration’ is clearly discernible in the evolution of RDO, too.

Firstly, in contrast to its participatory approach, the organisation has tended to operate in top-down manner, which has been primarily driven by ‘opportunism’. This is clearly hinted at in Mr. Dardmand’s statement quoted above (p. 248-49). That is, the organisation is now engaging in more and more projects to make profits.
Similarly, Mr. Sarmad’s (age: 50s) use of the term ‘mercantilism’ to refer to moneymaking tendency (see Chapter 7, p. 223) in the organisation further corroborates this finding. The strategy with which RDO enrolled into some of the sectors, especially microfinance, indicates that, in contrast to its assertiveness in the past (see Mr. Nashir’s statement on p. 248), it began to readily accept donors’ terms and conditions. For instance, while interviewing Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), the Management Coordinator, I instantly commented that RDO appeared to have ‘corporatised’. He replied after a while:

This is a big discussion just as you referred to the corporatisation of the NGO world and blah blah blah. It all goes back to what you referred… this is political philosophy. Isn’t it? [after keeping silent for a while] what are we working for? What are we working towards? One word: Capitalism! [emphasis original]. For example, microfinance. Don’t mind my slang words but I’m gonna be honest. Why the fuck [emphasis original] do you want a person to get to understand what credit is? They don’t have a project, they don’t have the capacity to use [PKR] 10,000 – 12,000 [= £ 73 – 87]. Why do you want them to get this money, why do you want them to get to understand and get used to this thing?

Read in conjunction with the analysis of microfinance in Chapter 7 (p. 219-35), the statement made by a considerably powerful and experienced staff-member clearly suggests that the organisation has been largely working as ‘agent of neoliberalism’ in the microfinance sector and to a certain extent in the agricultural value chain. Macro neoliberal policies under SAPs and PRSPs have the tendency to intensify uneven development (Kiely, 2007) but a similar process has been replicated at micro level through NGOs’ microfinance initiatives. In RDO’s case, microcredit was part of its foundational agenda. However, as is clearly acknowledged in Mr. Nashir’s comment, RDO contributed to uneven development at the micro level after expanding its microfinance portfolio. In historical institutional terms, RDO recalibrated its functions to adjust to the ‘poverty alleviation’ agenda but, instead of
alleviating rural poverty, it contributed to their financial vulnerability by enrolling them merely to distribute interest-based loans.

Alongside the above development, RDO adopted the new ‘three-tiered’ mobilisation strategy (see Chapter 5, p. 145-50), as part of which it also introduced the role of a new functionary in the social mobilisation, viz., Community Resource Person (CRP). However, CRPs have virtually taken on the role of Social Organisers. Since the field-staff either do not feel committed to organisational goal or do not have the high morale to perform their duties, they often use CRPs to hold initial dialogues with the communities. For example, as was noted in Chapter 7 (p. 240), Mr. Bajang (age: 30s) confirmed that he received a call from field-staff to make community organisations. It is least likely that a CRP would hold initial dialogues without ever mentioning the tangible benefits communities would accrue or without referring to the negligence or failure of state and presenting RDO as an organisation that could instead help them. This change in field-staff's approach to do the ‘spadework’ for social mobilisation through CRPs indicates that, instead of taking it as a process, social mobilisation is taken as just an ‘intervention’ that has to be ‘delivered’. Mr. Sarmad (age: 50s) referred to this development as the shift away from ‘programme’ approach to ‘project’ approach, which Mr. Imtihaan (age: 40s), the ex-NRM officer, explained in the following terms.

Project approach includes making of streets and other things. This is just like a contract system. There is long term planning in program approach. Suppose for three years you have strategy and then you should have projects, which contribute to the overall goal. RDO does not believe in its own concept and they [i.e., the management] want to do their own practical. They should make a structure to facilitate service delivery mechanism. They should provide PI [physical infrastructure scheme] to strengthen their [i.e., communities'] social fabric. They need to be choosier.
While collecting such organisational ‘stories’ (Boyce, 1996) for drawing comparison and contrast between ‘past’ and ‘present’ of the organisation, the staff members seemed to primarily ‘blame’ donors for the limited effectiveness of RDO’s agenda. However, during periods of reflections on data, it was realised that, while interviewees criticised donors, e.g., USAID, it was this donor which had originally provided funding for RDO’s feasibility study. When it was put to the interviewees as to when they thought changes in donors’ approach began to happen, they almost unanimously pointed out two periods of the post-9/11 funding regime and the post-2005 earthquake. Each of these has had implications for RDO and the NGO sector at large, which I discuss below separately.

After 9/11, when Pakistan became ‘non-NATO ally’ in the war on terror, large amount of aid began flowing to the country. However, as elsewhere in conflict-affected regions of the world, aid came with the ‘development-for-security imperative to stabilise, strengthen or prevent the falling apart of states considered to be failed, weak or simply unable to govern effectively’ (Fowler, 2008: 114; see also, Edwards, 2008b). For Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, it brought ‘armed social work’ (Kukis, 2006 cited in Fowler, 2008: 115) ‘to win hearts and minds through reconstruction while maintaining order by force of arms’ (Fowler, 2008: 115). For NGOs, it brought more constraining aid conditionalities, a prime example of which is The Agridevelopment Project (TAP) where farmers were not provided with fertilisers out of the alleged fear of the material being used for making bombs. The linking of development aid with security conditionalities might have further tightened after the 2008 crises of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the killing of Bin Laden in 2012. Perhaps, a more concrete example of a project based on ‘development-for-security imperative’ (Fowler, 2008: 114) is the Programme for Emancipation, Activism and Community Empowerment awarded by the European Union to RDO. It
is a €40 million project operational in a number of districts, which is expected to reach out to 2.7 million people in the militancy-affected areas (RDO, 2015: n.p.).

According to Mr. Nashir (age: 40s), ‘it is the biggest project ever in the history of the EU to be awarded to a single NGO’. Yet he complained:

They [EU] made us change our game. Seriously, big time, big time change. Its gonna have crazy crazy impact on how we approach things. Right? We have our philosophy. EU have made us do a thing which you cannot imagine. We have never gghgh... we did not know even the C of the word contractor. We did not know contractor. We would do things through the community, from the community. Seven districts, more than 5 billion Pakistani rupees. They made us C&W [Construction and Works department of government of Pakistan].

Denskus (2010: 236) argues that peace building initiatives do not ‘transform societies in or emerging from conflict, but to maintain stability’. Whether a project, such as above, brings ‘development’ and ‘stability’ or not, it does have negative implications for Pakistani NGOs, including RDO. Part of the reason that funders such as USAID and EU have been recently top-down in their approach has also to do with the financial mismanagement in the NGO sector. Before analysing the causes of these practices in the sector and its implications for the case study organisation, I will first briefly refer to the impact of humanitarian initiatives undertaken by the RDO itself.

According to the staff members, RDO’s initiative in relief and recovery services in the wake of 2005 earthquake was entirely based on humanitarian impulse. Nevertheless, its establishment of a permanent separate section for humanitarian services at the top management-level and its enrolment into relief services to internally displaced persons and the victims of natural disasters is also an indication of ‘commercial’ approach. This could be substantiated by looking into reports, such as (RDO, 2011d; 2013c; 2014), which appear as marketing ploys. While the vitality of such services to the victims of ‘war on terror’ cannot be undermined, it
nonetheless has turned the organisational focus away from its core aims. In the process of adapting to changing politico-economic circumstances, the organisational focus has shifted away from its agenda. In historical institutional terms, RDO’s choice to provide services to people affected in natural and political disasters have induced changes in its approach and organisational culture. Take the contradiction that, while RDO is in essence a social mobilisation-based NGO, in the LDP project, it did not have a Programme Officer (PO) for it.

The 2005 earthquake and subsequent disasters have had two implications for the case study organisation. Firstly, the 2005 disaster was so big in terms of human and material loss that quite a large number of aid agencies flocked for emergency relief services. However, it had two somewhat negative implications. Firstly, after Mr. Nashir made the above remark about the EU-funded project, I asked him for possible reasons for donors' top-down approach. He replied that quite a huge amount of money was embezzled by the NGOs that emerged overnight to absorb the aid that was so freely available, especially after 2005 earthquake. Secondly, people in the disaster affected areas, whether living in emergency camps or not, also resorted to accessing every organisation for food and non-food items. The observation of ‘corruption’, according to Mr. Nashir, made the donors more top-down and stricter in requirements as a consequence of which organisations, like RDO, did not have much choice left but to work according to donors’ agenda.

Finally, in addition to the organisational changes induced from above by the donors, changes in the institutional environment of Pakistani NGOs in general have made the situation for RDO more problematic. Just as RDO has expanded and engaged in a large number of projects, so have a large number of old as well as newly established, NGOs. International donors have been channelling funds to them to work for ‘peace’ and ‘development’. However, for RDO, the change has translated
into a major challenge at the community level. For instance, UNDP headed a multi-
million US$ Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme –
understandably, an instance of a project run under ‘development-for-security
imperative’ for Afghan refugees ‘affected’ areas – in the Khyber Agency of the
Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and 12 districts, 6 each in the provinces
of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The EU, Japan, Germany, the US state
department and the ministry of States and Frontier Regions (Pakistan) had jointly
funded the project (UNDP, 2013). In 2012 alone, it delivered projects worth US$
7,314,000 (UNDP, 2013: n.p.; see also footnote no. 21). Such initiatives have
created a socialising environment where community members perceive NGOs,
including RDO, as mere providers of cash and/or welfare services for free. For
instance, consider the reflections of the Community Specialist, Mr. Daaman (age:
30s), on his field experience:

In addition to RDO there were other organisations as well, which
were just giving cash and in-kind stuff and everything, you see. For
instance, RAHA-people are working with us in 2, 3 Union Councils.
They picked up mostly our Community Organisations because we
began working there before them but that proved bad for us because
they propose [PKR] 20 lac [= £ 14,500] for that Community Physical
Infrastructure project for which we propose [PKR] 5 lac [= £ 3600].
See? So, the community got such bad habits telling us that look
RAHA-people work over there and give [PKR] 20 lac [= £ 14,400] and
you pay [PKR] 5 lac [= £ 3600].

Similarly, on 15 November 2015, a trainee financial assistant at the headquarters,
Mr. Adan narrated the story of interventions in Brom, a small town in one of the
Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The town has a population of
approximately 187,000. However, according to the interviewee, more than 22 NGOs
were working on ‘protection’ at the time of the interview. He also said that the actual
figure of NGOs working on ‘protection’ might be higher but he gave the above figure
because the Training Centre of RDO coordinated with them for delivering some
training sessions. The 22 NGOs were working on varieties of ‘protection’, such as ‘child protection’ and ‘women protection’. More alarmingly, since each NGO provided Travelling Allowance (TA) and per Diem Allowance (DA) to the trainees of the workshops and invited them to participate in the sessions for that reason, it had become customary for people to inquire about the value of TA and DA if invited by an NGO including RDO. Keeping in view Banfield’s (1958) theory about ‘amoral familism’ in peasant economies, it can be argued that these provisions are contributing further to rural communities’ tendency to act for personal benefit. Thus, if the historically entrenched norms of preference for personal (familial) gain over public good could not be easily replaced with democratic practices at the time when RDO worked committedly, then working under the current ‘commercial’ approach and the environment of people’s expectations for money has made it almost impossible for RDO to motivate them without offering them monetary benefits.

No concrete evidence regarding RDO’s engagement in the practice of offering TA/DA could be documented. However, working in such an environment does entail that the social organisers and/or CRPs would offer community members tangible benefits, such as improvements in physical infrastructure, poultry, plant seedlings etc. as means to ‘organise’ them. In this regard, Khan et al.’s (2010) reflections on Western donors’ funding to NGOs to work on ‘Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)’ in Pakistan’s football industry for the elimination of child ‘labour’ are relevant to cite. They made the following comments after documenting contradictory rationalities of NGOs’ field-staff regarding the implementation of CSR-based initiatives:

… the problematic nature of the [CSR] drive for modernisation read as Westernisation, and the need to reassert local cultural values and traditions in the face of Western effacements and marginalisation … are part of a dense context that remains largely opaque to Western eyes, leading to interventions that are misaligned with local needs
and realities and which often bring negative unintended consequences... (Khan et al., 2010: 1433).

To bring the point to the context of this research, I would argue that the often-cited ‘neoliberal', 'service-oriented' shift in NGOs is indeed applicable to the case of RDO, but the post-9/11 context has also given an imperial ‘tinge’ to NGOs' interventions. Assuming that if RDO had neither adopted the neoliberal mode of microfinance and value chain and the humanitarian relief services, it would still be very difficult for it to work on its agenda for two reasons. Firstly, the imperialist-style treatment of most donors in post-9/11 Pakistan and their ‘short-term’ solutions to historically entrenched problems could hardly have allowed it to work according to its own agenda. Secondly, and most importantly, projects by the international and national NGOs in rural areas are socialising people to consider 'development' in terms of short-term monetary benefits of TA/DA. I have already demonstrated that rural people have ‘amoral familism', which has been reinforced by clientelistic political system. Excessive funding especially in the form of monetary benefits are further strengthening rural people’s preferences for private benefits over public goods. Hence, RDO is not just constrained by the limitations that developed out of its decisions. The wider politico-economic factors have also made it difficult for it to work according to the principles of RSP approach.

The predicament and implications of working in the post-9/11 funding regime can be summed up in the comments of an ex-Agricultural Officer of RDO, Mr. Faraan (age: 40s). He made the following comments regarding NGOs’ dilemmas in conflict-affected areas but the statement is quoted for both its aptness and conciseness. Mr. Faraan attended a meeting held between the representatives of a consortium of NGOs and the government officials including the Commissioner of a certain district.
According to him, the Commissioner vehemently criticised NGOs in response to which Mr. Faraan said:

> We work with the peasants of a village and we work with the feudal of a village, also the clergy of a village as well as the bandits of a village. I am just giving you one example: donors are like women. There is an attraction in them; they have the money. Government is like men because they have the authority and we, NGOs, are like Hijras [eunuchs] and I am giving you the example of Hijras [eunuchs] because a Hijra [eunuch] dances everywhere. Today we are dancing in those parts of Kurram [tribal] agency where even your Tehsildar\(^{37}\) cannot go and your Political Agent\(^{38}\) cannot go and we Hijras [eunuchs] are dancing over there in those camps where in front of us are Taliban on one side and Pakistan army on the other and in the middle I am sitting and we are working with those bereaved, injured on whose forehead this is not written as to which type of a person [s/he] is. We have taken such a big risk but the reality is that we have no say, whether this man slaps me or that man slaps me.

In Pakistani society, eunuchs have a very low social standing. They are considered unfit for socially approved ‘good’ or ‘appreciable’ occupations and are often marginalised and stigmatised. Similarly, dancing is also socially considered a degraded occupation. Hence, eunuchs are considered fit for dancing in marriage ceremonies and other celebratory rituals, such as carnivals, weddings, and births (Jami, n.d.). Keeping in view the analyses in the two preceding chapters and the analysis conducted in this chapter, the analogy seems apt.

My research has found that during the period of its reportedly efficient performance in the 1990s, it did have a thoroughly participatory management structure and field operations, but that proved effective in bringing bottom up change in the short run. It could not control whether community members accepted and embraced it merely for subsidies or for longer term change. In terms of Mr. Faraan’s statement, it was powerless in directly imposing its mission on the villagers. Similarly, it could not

\(^{37}\) A high-ranking official in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

\(^{38}\) The topmost official in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).
affect change in intra-communal factors. In addition to this dilemma, the gradual neoliberalisation of its microfinance services further weakened it to educate and sensitisise community members. Thus, while its function was to help them move above micro clientelistic structures, its field operations began suffering from the very problem for the alleviation of which it was founded in the first place. From the perspective of the above statement, it began happening as a consequence of ready acceptance of donors’ terms and conditions. Finally, the flow of funding, especially in the post-9/11 contexts, created an environment wherein, in terms of Hillhorst (2005), many ‘comeNGOs’ type of NGOs and projects began appearing. Since, RDO’s overall approach had become commercial, it became even more difficult to appropriately organise the poor in viable community organisations.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter analysed and identified the factors that historically influenced RDO during the process of its evolution. It found that RDO began and initially worked in a participatory manner towards the achievement of its goal of promoting democratic and empowerment-oriented people’s organisations at the grassroots. The outcomes of its activities, however, were path dependent (Pierson, 2000) in that it could not significantly transform rural livelihoods characterised by inequality and power struggle based on ethnic and class divisions. This was due to two challenges: its lack of clarity about the ultimate form and function of the community organisations and RDO’s inability to appropriately plan for and manage community level issues. These factors almost always thwarted its goal of bottom up democratic change. Moreover, over the years, its adoption of the initiatives, particularly the neoliberal form of microfinance, increased the gap between its goals and practices. This, in turn, made it even harder to transform rural communities, and hence it became more path dependent than path breaking. In fact, in the wake of such innovations,
instead of working to erode patronage-based relationships in the communities, it rather reinforced them, which, in turn, was largely due to the ready acceptance of donors’ terms. Moreover, while the organisation gradually drifted from its aims, the macro institutional environment of the NGO-sector as a whole also began playing its role in furthering its clientelistic approach. It has been demonstrated that this particularly occurred after 9/11, and after the natural disasters of earthquake and flood in 2005 and 2010, respectively, when Pakistan began receiving higher amount of aid. In positive terms, alongside other NGOs, it was beneficial for RDO to deliver services to more and more people both in the sectors for which it was originally founded and in the new sector of humanitarian disaster relief. Negatively, however, the organisation became opportunistic and largely succumbed to donors’ demands. As a result, it weakened its commitment to social mobilisation, which, the evidence presented in this study shows, was admitted by the RDO’s staff members. Finally, the presence of other domestic and international NGOs financing projects for physical infrastructure and social mobilisation has also made it difficult for RDO to work to its own policy agenda. Thus, faced with these challenges, some of which came from RDO’s own decisions and others operating externally, the formation of community level organisations and their functioning is only to a limited degree infused by the spirit of empowerment and democratisation.
Chapter 9 – Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

This thesis has contributed to existing knowledge on NGOs in the global South by undertaking the case study of a Pakistani NGO, Rural Development Organisation (RDO). It examined the influence of formal and informal institutions and their previous historical pathways in shaping the policies and practices of NGOs in their efforts for empowerment and democratisation in rural areas. The findings are the result of eight months of qualitative case study. Using qualitative interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observational data and documentary evidence, it has investigated the politico-economic context for the establishment of RDO as well as its approach to social change (SQ1). In addition to this, it also explored the historical evolution of its organisational procedures, intervention strategies and types of interventions as well as their positive and negative contribution to its goal for organising the rural poor for participatory empowerment (SQ2). In undertaking an historical analysis of the preceding aspects, the analysis went beyond the ‘donor/aid-NGO’ dichotomy to also include the influence of intra-community relationships and politico-economic environment on RDO’s approach and practices for social change (SQ3). This involved reviewing secondary literature on politico-economic history of Pakistan, analysing observational data and conducting interviews, including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with male and female community members and the staff-members of the organisation. Cognizant of the lasting influence of formal and informal institutions, the thesis has also sought to determine the extent to which RDO’s innovative interventions have been successful in empowering the rural poor and explored the facilitating as well as the
constraining factors in this regard (SQ4). Drawing particularly on historical institutional arguments (Pierson, 2000; 2004), the thesis has also assessed the implications of formal and informal institutional influences on NGOs’ potential for change in Pakistan and more widely in the global South (SQ5).

This chapter summarises the major findings of the research related to the above aims addressed in this thesis. It is pertinent to mention that the anon NGO is a large organisation working in over 20 districts and five tribal regions and implements projects with over 15 donors. The research contained in this thesis was carried out in a limited area which may not fully reflect the work of the anon NGO. In what follows, I present and elaborate on the findings in four sections. The first three sections spell out the ‘extent’ and ‘direction’ of the influences from the donors, the politico-economic changes and the community social structure in shaping RDO’s practices with regard to its goal for democratic and empowerment-oriented change in the rural areas of Pakistan. The final section reflects on the findings from the case study for their relatively wider implications for NGOs’ potential and limitations in the global South.

9.1 NGOs’ Emergence and Functioning in Pakistan: The Politico-economic and Institutional Context

The findings from this research are aligned with other researches regarding the significance of politico-economic context and the institutional framework in the emergence and performance of NGOs (Chapter 2). It has been demonstrated in Chapter 2 of the thesis that it is, by and large, agreed that the empowerment agenda for which NGOs emerged in developing countries gradually turned into more of a narrow and increasingly neoliberal form of ‘service-delivery’. This was evidenced with examples from their engagement with the governments as
‘collaborators’ for delivering variety of services and subscription to interventions, such as microfinance. Moreover, the shift from empowerment to working ‘instrumentally’ for service-delivery occurred primarily as a consequence of the implementation of the World Bank/IMF’s neoliberal policies of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in developing countries. The influence of neoliberal policies on NGOs’ empowerment agenda along with the negative impact of aid on their operations has been demonstrated to be the case in a variety of development contexts, such as Bangladesh (Feldman, 1997), India (Sahoo, 2013), Latin America (Petras, 1997), and Pakistan (Bano, 2008a; 2008b; 2012; Qadeer, 1997; Zaidi, 1999).

Keeping the importance of institutional framework and politico-economic context in view, it has been shown that, as in most developing countries, Pakistan also experienced preponderant growth in NGOs when Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) were implemented as part of the global shift to neoliberal economic strategies in the 1980s (Chapter 4). In this regard, it has been demonstrated that except for the humanitarian NGOs, which grew as a result of the US-led war against the USSR in 1980s (Chapter 4), Pakistan’s NGO sector was significantly smaller and professionally less efficient (Key, 1990) until the implementation of the SAPs in 1988. While the ideological turn from state-led development to market-driven reforms was mostly based on assumptions rather than verifiable evidence (Chapter 2), the thesis has argued that in Pakistan’s context there was considerable validity in the ‘failure’ of state-centric modernisation as the state agencies were found to be significantly deficient in delivering services to the masses (Chapter 4). This has been evidenced with the government’s low spending on the key social sectors of health, education and employment. Thus, NGOs gradually emerged. It has been shown that they emerged in a ‘statist regime’ in Pakistan. In a ‘statist regime’, the
government exercises power in wider social policies mostly on the behalf of political and business elite but working-class people are excluded (Salamon and Anheier, 1996; 1998; 2000).

Determining what this means, this thesis has also shown that the ‘statist regime’ of Pakistan also developed certain institutional features, which have path-dependent characteristics (Pierson, 2000; 2004). Reviewing literature regarding the functioning of the local government structures, it has been demonstrated that throughout the country’s history, both the military and the civilian governments in Pakistan have taken measures and ‘reforms’, which have served elites rather than the majority of the people. In fact, every ‘new’ local government structure actually reinforced the powers of the politicians, the army and the bureaucracy. The foundation of these entrenched structures of inequality has been shown to have emerged out of the colonial policies to privilege the landed elites in giving them discretionary rights over the use and control of agricultural lands (Ali, 1987). This paved the way for their becoming major political players in the post-colonial period. The civilian and the military rulers in collusion with bureaucracy introduced and strengthened patron-client relationships (Gough et al., 2004), which, over the decades, have become path dependent (Pierson, 2000). Hence, the citizens have statutory rights only in theory (Gough, 2004), as in practice they have relied on their personal network of relationships to access local politicians and public bureaucracies to receive services (Chapter 4). As such, it has been an almost uninterrupted ‘self-reinforcement process’ (Mahoney, 2000) in that existing institutional arrangements have always obstructed (Levi, 1997) people-oriented ‘change’ (Chapter 4). This practice of accessing politicians in an individualised form has socialised citizens to consider services by the politicians and public bureaucracies as personal goods so that they hardly think about the larger and long-term effects of such practices. Additionally,
since the social structure of rural society is based on peasant economic transactions, instead of formal statutory and modern (rational) market transactions, relationships between individuals and families are characterised by inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and class.

With the above structures in place, the case study organisation emerged amidst the wave of NGOs’ growth that spurred in the wake of SAPs in 1988 onwards. Keeping the distinction between NGOs’ political/radical role versus neoliberal/instrumental role in view (Edwards, 2011; Heyse, 2006), it has been shown that RDO’s original agenda was genuinely democratic and egalitarian (Chapter 5). In this regard, from the review of its foundational document (RDO, n.d.) and interviews with experienced and senior members of staff (Chapter 5), it has been demonstrated that RDO’s original ‘radical/political’ role for bottom up change was to fill the gap created by deficient local government structures. Furthermore, it has been also shown that although RDO emerged at the beginning of the wave of NGOs’ growth in Pakistan in the 1980s, it did not import an intervention model from a donor or from other outside sources (Chapter 5). Rather, the philosophic underpinnings of its approach were traced to the 19th century Utopian socialist movement, which, in the context of Pakistan, were operationalised initially in a rural development project in Comilla and later on in the shape of the AKRSP’s model for social change in the Northern Areas of Pakistan in 1980s.

It has also been demonstrated that until late 1980s Pakistani NGO sector was considerably small in size and lacking in professional competence (Key, 1990), the reported success of the AKRSP model created ‘isomorphic’ processes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991) for the establishment of RDO along exactly the same lines on which it was based. Institutional ‘isomorphism’ has been explained as the process through which an organisation exhibits features of other organisations.
working in its field of expertise (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991). The philosophical assumptions of AKRSP were based on the utopian socialist ideals of ‘social harmony’ for inculcating a sense of ‘association’, ‘community’ and ‘cooperation’ (Taylor, 1982) among the rural poor in Pakistan. These principles were found to have been infused into the intervention model of RDO out of the ‘mimetic isomorphic’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991) influence of AKRSP. ‘Mimetic isomorphism’ has been explained to occur in an organisation when it is uncertain about the efficacy of its own goals and practice and so adopts the practice of an organisation, or organisations, that it considers successful (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991). In addition to this, its membership in the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN) – which is an umbrella organisation of all the Rural Support Programme-based NGOs – has been shown to operate as a ‘formal’ means for mimetic and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991). This has been demonstrated with the example of the three-tiered social mobilisation model, which diffused into the RDO through the RSPN (Chapter 5). In addition to this, however, it has been also demonstrated that the three-tiered social mobilisation strategy of the organisation is interpretable in the historical institutional concepts of ‘coordination effect’, ‘adaptive expectations’, and ‘learning effect’ (Arthur, 1994). Coordination effect means that organisational members would keep to the rules or routines through which they have been already coordinating, as it makes behaviour and performance predictable (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011). Adaptive expectations mean that that organisational members adopt routines or practices ‘… because they expect other to do the same and wish to end up on the winners’ side’ (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011: 325; Pierson, 2000). Learning effect means that the more people perform an operation, the more efficient they become at doing it, and hence an organisation would keep to the same set of practices and routines rather than incur costs in innovations (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011; Pierson, 2000). Keeping these
analytical concepts in view, it has been shown that RDO adopted three-tiered social mobilisation because its management and field-staff had developed a set of routines around it already. Similarly, it also introduced the ‘innovation’ because it wished ‘to end up on the winners’ side’ (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011: 325). Finally, organisational members had already developed skills around the theory and practice of social mobilisation, so it adopted the three-tiered social mobilisation for this reason.

9.2 Vertical Influences from Above

The findings from this research on RDO are aligned with other researchers’ findings on NGOs in Pakistan. Like others, the research has found that NGOs are facing difficulties in mobilising community members for pro-active membership and participation in community organisations (Bano, 2012; Bano, 2008a; 2008b).

With regard to RDO, it has been demonstrated that, in addition to the ‘positive’ influences from its membership of RSPN, it is subject to the ‘negative’ influences from the broader NGO ‘environment’. In this regard, it has been shown that, in the post-9/11 contexts, a large number of national and international NGOs have emerged to mitigate the effects of political crises and natural disasters (Chapter 4). Most of these organisations, according to the views of the staff members interviewed, are spending huge sums of money without substantially mobilising community members. This research has demonstrated that the community members have been socialised to view NGOs’ interventions as means for receiving tangible goods and money (Chapter 7 & 8). This, in turn, has made it significantly difficult for RDO to follow its three-tiered social mobilisation strategy. In this regard, recent figures about RDO’s achievements regarding the formation of Community Organisations (COs), Village Organisations (VOs), and Local Support Organisations
(LSOs) have been presented to demonstrate that a hasty process of social mobilisation has replaced the original slow process of organising communities (Chapter 6).

In addition to the above, it has been also demonstrated that, in contrast to its past emphasis on social mobilisation as a point of emphasis with the donors, RDO has largely tilted towards the delivery of services often according to donors’ will (Chapter 7 & 8). Furthermore, this has been argued to have occurred partly as a consequence of engaging in humanitarian and relief services and partly as a consequence of subscribing to the neoliberal mode of interventions, especially in microfinance (Chapter 7).

For instance, with regard to the case of ‘retail’ microfinance, the interviewees from the organisation confirmed that it was part of the original foundational ‘Rural Support Programme (RSP)’ approach of the RDO, but the current and ex-employees of the organisations also widely confirmed that the organisation’s expansion in the services was triggered more by commercial concerns to earn profit than by the concerns for poverty alleviation and democratisation in the rural areas. Furthermore, the commercial direction of the interventions was found to have introduced monthly and quarterly credit disbursement targets, which the staff-members confirmed eventually turned out detrimental to the organisation’s goals in two ways. Firstly, the commercialisation of credit delivery brought in the New Public Management-based (Hood, 1995) performance appraisal tools (CGAP, 1999; Isern et al., 2008), under the influence of which, the ex-employees confirmed that they clientelistically dealt with the community members to achieve credit-disbursement targets. This was demonstrated to be an instance of the development of transaction between RDO and the community on the basis of patron-client relationship (Gough et al., 2004). Relatedly, the interviewees also confirmed that, since credit-disbursement
mechanism overlooked the ineligibility criteria of potential loanees, a sizeable number of community members withheld payments on the grounds of religious proscriptions against interest-based lending. Thus, it has been argued that, instead of convincing the rural poor in culturally appropriate terms to accept interest-based loans as potentially contributing to their poverty alleviation, in the hasty process of credit disbursement, it sabotaged its own goal of providing ‘social guidance’ to the rural poor.

Similarly, the findings from this research have demonstrated that, although RDO has been innovative in designing newer forms of interventions, owing to its commercial focus, those are not contributing to democratisation and empowerment of the poor in the rural areas (Chapter 7 & 8). This has been found to be the case in its innovation of establishing village banks for women’s poverty alleviation and empowerment. Although the staff-members from the organisation have been found to be highly appreciative of the innovation, most women interviewees from a village bank raised a variety of complaints. The interviewees’ complaints about inequitable distribution of grants among the women members, favouritism and nepotism by the bank leadership in nominating members for trainings, loans and grants have been demonstrated to be hardly contributing to women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation. Rather, the innovation has been found to be perpetuating existing inequalities based on class, ethnicity and gender (Chapter 7). Hence, while apparently innovative, the intervention’s contribution to the perpetuation of existing structures is found to be indicative of path dependence in the organisation (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010; 2011; Sydow and Schreyögg, 2013).

Similarly, The Agridevelopment Project (Chapter 6) has been found to be a relatively innovative intervention, which, despite administrative mismanagement partly by the donor (USAID) and partly from the collaborating organisation (ASF), was highly
praised both by the farmer interviewees and the staff-members. Yet, the research in this thesis has demonstrated that the long-term outcomes of the intervention are more in line with neoliberal strategies for modernising agriculture in the countries of the global South, such as Pakistan. On the positive side, it has been demonstrated that the provision of training and agricultural goods with regard to the development of value chain-based structured farming for off-seasons vegetable significantly contributed to raising farmers’ income. It was found that, although farmers complained about the provision of inappropriate items, the late delivery of agricultural inputs and the non-provision of fertilisers and pesticides, they nonetheless appreciated the intervention for its economic benefits. Similarly, the study also found that the staff-members, while acknowledging the administrative oversights in the delivery of items, highly appreciated the real-time enhancement in farmers’ productivity and therefore income. However, keeping the larger and longer-term implications in view, such an intervention, though beneficial for farmers’ income, also implicitly socialised them to move from the production of traditional staple crops to consider farming as a commercial, market-based enterprise. While the development in itself appears appreciable, it has been demonstrated that farmers’ move towards the use of GMOs for commercial purposes could have the implications of endangering the environment, making their farms less productive over time, exposing farmers to market fluctuations and finally result in the commodification of agriculture (McMichael and Schneider, 2011). Finally, analysis from the observational data and interviews with the staff-members and the community members demonstrated that, due to donor’s (USAID’s) frequently changing requirements for various documents and other procedures as well as laxity on the part of the ASF, RDO’s fieldworkers used patronage-based tactics. This finding adds further ‘flesh’ to the argument made above to the effect that, owing to
the RDO’s commercial interests, it is more intent on following donors’ terms and conditions than its principles.

9.3 Vertical Influences from Below and Horizontal Influences

This thesis has critiqued RDO for its inability to transform ethnicity, gender and class-based inequalities and has confirmed the findings from other researches on Pakistani NGOs inability to mobilise members (Bano, 2012). It, nonetheless, has also demonstrated that part of the reason that NGOs like RDO cannot consistently mobilise rural communities for democratic social change lies in the aid regime changes which took place after 9/11.

However, in contrast with the existing literature focusing on the ‘donor/aid-NGO’ dichotomy, this thesis has argued that there is no direct causal linear relationship between ‘aid’ and its impact on NGOs’ inability to mobilise members. This has been demonstrated by analysing the narratives of experienced, current and ex-employees, of RDO. In their view, until early 2000s, RDO had a strong community-oriented approach and organisational culture and the field-staff’s views and opinions were well regarded with respect to the interventions by the organisation.

Referring to the narratives of the experienced staff members, it has been shown that, although during the 1990s, RDO delivered interventions according to its goals and after careful planning, its inability to mobilise the rural poor partly emanated from the peasant economy-based social structure, the relationships in which are based on personal and paternalistic elements mediated particularly by ethnicity and gender distinctions (Chapter 7 & 8). Changing peasant societies through the introduction of contractual relationships based on formal rational rules of the market or politics is extremely difficult to achieve (Wood, 1997; Gough, et al., 2004). It has been shown to arise from low technological and economic development. As a result,
peasants' calculations are dictated by preference for personal good over public good or welfare (Banfield, 1958). Similarly, in the absence of viable state institutions, which has been also demonstrated to be the case in Pakistan (Chapter 4), individuals and community members rely on an informal network of relationships as a strategy for ensuring livelihood sustenance (Gough et al., 2004). This has been demonstrated to be the case in RDO’s projects. For instance, in the district of Walle (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), it implemented an innovative water supply scheme, which initially turned out beneficial for the community not only in providing water facility, but also in its contribution to community members’ economic development. However, owing primarily to ethnic rivalries, the intervention ultimately failed (Chapter 8).

It has also been demonstrated that it was beyond RDO’s resources and capabilities to fully analyse power inequalities in the communities and deal with them on a case-by-case basis. That is why inequalities would resurface as soon as it would exit the area after the designing of a seemingly successful intervention (Chapter 8). In addition to this, the failure to ‘transform’ rural societies through the RDO’s ‘Rural Support Programme (RSP)’ approach has been demonstrated to be partly due to its lack of clarity regarding the ultimate form, which the community organisations should have taken and more importantly their role after RDO exited the area (Chapter 8). In this regard, most senior employees, both current and previous, confirmed that, although the organisational structure was in congruence with its goals, the non-clarity regarding the vision for rural Community Organisation has been also in part responsible for RDO’s limitations.

Keeping in view the limitations imposed by its lack of clarity regarding its goals, increasing commercialisation, along with the challenge to operate in an environment where community members have increasingly begun perceiving NGOs as means for
subsidies and grants, it has been demonstrated that RDO’s operations, at least since 2000, have increasingly become path dependent (Pierson, 2000; 2004). The organisation has introduced innovations in microfinance, social mobilisation, and agriculture but due to intra-organisational processes (e.g., low morale and commitment of field-staff), external institutional pressures from above (donors, other NGOs) and from below (communities), it is not contributing to democratisation and empowerment at grassroots. Despite all those ‘innovations’, instead of changing patronage-based social structure at grassroots, it has become an agent of its perpetuation.

9.4 The implications of the findings for NGOs’ potential in Social Change in Pakistan and elsewhere

This thesis is based on a research into a single case study. Thus, caution must be exercised before making generalisations to the totality of NGOs in Pakistan and beyond to the wider context of the global South. This is reinforced by the fact that it has rested on a historical institutional analysis identifying explanations, which are mostly context specific (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Nonetheless, a few practical and theoretical implications of the study can be tentatively advanced.

Viewed in terms of the meaning and explanation of democratisation in Chapter 2 (p. 23-27), it can be concluded that although RDO – being founded on the philosophical ideals of utopian socialists (Chapter 5, p. 139-41) – aimed at strengthening both the ‘input legitimacy’ and ‘output legitimacy’ of the Pakistani state by mobilising people to work together cooperatively and demand services from relevant governmental and non-governmental authorities as well as by providing them with effective and efficient services at low costs, it significantly fell short of achieving both the ends for long term change. The findings from this research demonstrate that, as often
indicated, donors largely influence the policy agendas and operations of NGOs in the global South. Nonetheless, their influence on NGOs in Pakistan and more widely in the global South does vary from one donor to another. Moreover, it also changes substantially over time. A multilateral donor, like the World Bank, could be more top-down and imposing in its decisions and views on Pakistani NGOs than one of the UN multilateral agencies. Similarly, a bilateral agency, like the AusAID, operates less prescriptively (Chapter 7) than the USAID (Chapter 8). The analysis in this study also suggests that geopolitical developments also influence the direction and conditionality of aid. The political developments in Pakistan after the 9/11 and the dominant global media rhetoric of it being on the verge of state failure (Lieven, 2010) seem to have dictated many donors’ priorities and led to inflexibility while dealing with NGOs in Pakistan. In this regard, it seems appropriate to state that since Pakistan has been on the fault-lines of major global political developments (the Cold War, the Afghan War, the War on terror) (Chapter 4) a variety of donor agencies, the USAID being the leader, have been forthcoming with generous aid. However, as the Western powers came with a ‘quick fix’ solution to the ‘Afghanistan problem’ in post-9/11 contexts, so the donor agencies mostly worked with top-down approach and heavily fund interventions such as child protection, women’s protection, and heavily financed infrastructure projects to bring ‘peace’ and ‘prosperity’ to the poor in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Chapter 8) and other parts of Pakistan. Given the politically sensitive context of the country in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular, the findings from this case study cannot be generalised to politically stable countries of the global South. However, the findings are significant for conflict-affected regions, the most immediate example of which can be Afghanistan. In this regard, the findings demonstrate that ‘technically-designed’ ‘developmental’ solutions have negative social implications in socialising peasant communities in conflict affected areas away from developing politically positive
outlook to think and act beyond personal and familial issues. The research also
demonstrates that in addition to their own ‘commercialism’, organisations such as
RDO are also limited in their effectiveness as most interventions are socialising
people to consider development interventions as merely mechanisms for welfare
goods. In addition to this, the speedy process of intervention delivery is also making
it harder for NGOs to effectively engage with the communities for long-term
democratic and empowerment-oriented change.

The process of ‘speed’ or ‘quickness’ in interventions relates to the significance of
‘time’ as one of the main criteria affecting the ‘nature’ and ‘direction’ of social
change. It is with regard to the significance of historical time that I think this research
can claim to have made a contribution to knowledge on NGOs’ non/potential in
bringing social change. Although Peters et al. (2005: 1279) validly critique historical
institutionalism as being ‘more structuralist than more traditional models of structure
and agency’, the research in this thesis nonetheless points out that any planned
social change, especially that pursued through NGOs, is always mediated by the
formal and informal institutions of a given society. The research does not
demonstrate the ‘impossibility’ of change, but rather it highlights the significance of
existing structures, especially the increasing complexity of the state and society in
Pakistan, some of the social and political structures of which are still based on the
colonial lines. Thus, while in absolute terms, RDO and other NGOs with a similar
agenda of social change do provide vital services in countries like Pakistan, they
might not be able to transform social structures characterised by gender-
inequalities, ethnic rivalries and class divisions — something that is probably true of
much social change planned through NGOs.
Appendix 1: Postscript - An extract from the anon NGO's Response to Mr Owais' thesis

The anon NGO had agreed to become part of the research because of its management's deep commitment to learning and their fascination with how NGOs balance local and outside pressures (public vs private transcripts) while undertaking their work. While espousing high ideals, NGOs operate in South Asia in what Kabir has called "societies of birth," marked by deep hierarchical relationships, engrained clientelistic traditions and inequality. In addition, there is a constant struggle to find public space from government, incessant pressure from communities to meet their needs and donor's pressure to produce results while responding to multiple agendas and meeting varying accountability requirements. Social activism in this environment is a delicate balancing act where local aspiration and expectations have to be balanced with international hopes and aspirations.

The conclusion of the report that work of organisation's like the anon NGO undermine the State and break down social contract between the Citizen and the State is also not borne by the government's commitment to such programmes over almost a three decades life line of these programmes. The government sits on the Board of the anon NGO as a minority member. It has also provided the anon NGO with generous long-term capacity grant (Rs 700 million) to give its stability and help it fulfill its mission after 18 years of its existence, based on its performance. The government also continues to partner with the anon NGO in major programmes on poverty alleviation, hydro electricity generation and, education. The anon NGO has been encouraged to work in conflict areas and is the most prominent civil society contributor in conflict areas like FATA and Malakand Division because of its ability to deliver results. Government policy statements acknowledge the important role the
anon NGO plays in building trust between the Citizen's and the State. In the new Edition of World Bank's Economic Premise, "Can Donors and Non State Actors Undermine Citizen's legitimate Beliefs," it is stated that evidence suggests that an increase in service delivery, regardless of who provides it, strengthens citizen state relationship.

The researcher has attributed the top down, result based, stringent accountability requirements imposed on NGOs, as special to Pakistan because of NGO's negative performance here especially after 9/11 and earthquake 2005 when large amount of aid came in. NGOs come in thousands in Pakistan and are of varying sizes and pursue different goals; and because of this complexity, a study of them needs to distinguish between different organisations and their performance and role and not put them under one carpet. USAID according to the author provided US 4.5 billion of aid during this period with a substantial portion going to NGOs. But not even 00.01% of it flowed into the anon NGO which was one of the largest organisations operating in the conflict and humanitarian areas? Who were its recipients? Similarly, Natsios (2010) a famous former USAID Director in "Clash of the Counter bureaucracy and Development" has highlighted the clash between the compliance side of aid programme (counter bureaucracy) and its technical and programmatic side leading to less space for transformational programmes. This is a phenomenon widely found it aid agencies today. The anon NGO while working with aid agencies has to maneuver to find the most community friendly and empowering way of working. It cannot be a beggar and a chooser at the same time. The EU funded PEACE programmes did not have community friendly community procurement procedures. The anon NGO was able to temper them and still meet both the needs of the communities and the stringent EU accountability requirements. This remains an ongoing struggle for the anon NGO until the Aid industry and governments
acknowledges that change is emergent and complex and more process oriented approaches and creative approaches to accountability will have to be adopted if it is to remain transformational.

The researcher misses some important milestones which led to the phenomenal growth of the anon NGO since 2000. The change in leadership in 2001, the capacity grant given by DFID in 2001 to address its weaknesses in engineering, financial and monitoring systems; the devolution in 2001 which opened up new opportunities and new policies; the rebuilding of relationship with government after 2003; the earthquake of 2005 and rebuilding of 60,000 houses by the anon NGO in a widely acknowledged community driven programme; the leaving of Peshawar by national and international NGOs as the security situation deteriorated from 2007 and filling of the space by the anon NGO; and government long term capacity grant to the anon NGO to help it play a prominent role in participatory development and leverage additional resources for the province; the highly successful poverty alleviation programme implemented in partnership by the government from 2009; delivery of non-food items in partnership with UNHCR to 3.5 million households in the humanitarian crisis; generating 20 megawatts of electricity with communities to win the Ashden Award in PEACE project. These brought credibility, built trust and brought resources for the organisation. More than 40 international organisations worked with the anon NGO with no complaints.

The decision to make humanitarian programmes part of the anon NGO's work was made on the basis of the humanitarian imperative. Most of the areas where the anon NGO operated were in the grip of a humanitarian crisis and the anon NGO could not become a spectator and sit on the side lines while its members and beneficiaries suffered simply because its founding document had different ideas. The anon NGO was never set up as a project it was set up as an organisation
where the Board of the organisation had the competence and authority to decide how best it achieved its mission. With benefit of hindsight the decision to add humanitarian work to its competence is considered to be a wise decision because it has enabled the anon NGO to build trust with the communities in conflict and disaster hit areas and has become the foundation ground for building a developmental programme with them in the long run.

The idea of a three-tier organisation came from the experience of the RSPs and not any donor pressure. Experiences showed that while grass root organisation play an important role in poverty reach and service delivery, unless higher level organisations and networks with roots in the base are formed, communities will not be able to develop linkages with government or influence policy. This led to new strategies. The idea that only by building voice government systems can be changed is an illusion. Most problems encountered in development have a collective action nature and the kind of work the RSPs do helps in improving governance by solving through multi stakeholder partnerships.

The anon NGO has never claimed it to be a revolutionary organisation that would bring about a social revolution. The research acknowledges that it has brought services to millions who would have otherwise been deprived of them: in drinking water, communication, micro finance, education, vocational training and gender equality and humanitarian aid. The researchers evidence shows that the anon NGO in its programme tries to move away from traditional patron client relationships and adopts various ways of empowering communities, but in practice struggles to overcome those ingrained traditions and expectations. Similarly, quite contrary to the researchers sweeping conclusion, that the anon NGO does not empower communities, it’s clear that there are some pertinent observations about dependency relations between staff and communities that is not the same as saying
no empowerment is taking place. For all its faults (delays and choice of material etc) the programme does succeed in strengthening livelihoods of the farmers. The thesis shows that the capacity to critically interact with the programme is there in the community which is an empowering experience.

The anon NGO’s vast achievements have been possible because of its outreach in communities through the social mobilization process. It fully understands that the process of social change and building group capacity is never going to be a linear process. It will be an incremental process where there would be many setbacks. Social mobilization is and will remain central to this process. The study proves how daunting this task is but it also shows it worthwhile pursuing despite many blemishes and some shortcoming and success does come.
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Appendix 2: In-house organisational documents analysed and cited in the thesis


Appendix 3: Official Request for Accessing RDO

To

The General Manager
Rural Development Organisation (RDO),
Peshawar

Subject: Permission for Accessing RDO for Academic (PhD) Research

Dear Sir,

I hope you are fine.

I am pursuing doctoral studies (Sociology) at the University of Warwick, UK on ‘The Dynamics of Organisational Learning in NGOs in Pakistan’. The topic emerged experientially during the process of taking my students – as faculty member in sociology at the University of Peshawar – to visit NGOs, including your esteemed organisation.

Let me briefly state that the purpose of the research is to explore the influences of local (societal) factors on the policies, plans and processes of learning in RDO. As such the central aim is to explore and understand issues and challenges that have propelled RDO to its present stature. The study would involve:

1. Interviews with (I) Staff members (Managers and field workers) and (II) CBO-members;
2. Participation in (I) training workshops for staff-members and CBO-members and (II) meetings of field-staff with CBO-members and CBO-members’ meetings amongst each other;
3. Review of documents such as annual reports, policy documents, brochures and pamphlets etc.
In undertaking this research work I would look to minimise any impact on the day-to-day activities of your organisation. I would also take steps to ensure that your organisation, plus any individuals who speak to me, is guaranteed anonymity and that all information collected is suitably anyonymised (http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/rss/researchgovernance_ethics/research_code_of_practice/130318_research_code_of_practice.pdf). It may also be the case that your organisation will find some of my research findings of interest or value and I would therefore be happy to provide you with a summary of my research findings once the study has been concluded.

I will contact you shortly to discuss my request in more detail. I look forward to the opportunity of speaking to you then.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Sincerely yours,

Syed Owais
PhD researcher, University of Warwick (UK)
s.owais@warwick.ac.uk
Appendix 4: Terms of Reference (ToRs) signed with RDO for Data Collection

Terms of Reference (ToRs) for undertaking research at:

Mr. Syed Owais, for the purpose of undertaking his PhD research on ‘The Dynamics of Organisational Learning in NGOs in Pakistan’ at , is granted/allowed following facilities at:

1. Access to organisational documents;
2. Interviewing staff members – both field-level and managerial – and community members;
3. Participation in field-related activities as outlined in research proposal already shared with the organisation.

In return for the above, Mr. Syed Owais, agrees to abide by the terms and conditions as underscored below. Mr. Syed Owais agrees that:

I. He will not share or hand over any of the documents to third party in any format;
II. He will observe the ethical standards of academic research including the principles of (i) informed consent, (ii) confidentiality, and (iii) anonymity;
III. He will share a copy of his research report with the organisation for the purpose of sharing it with research participants.
IV. He will share his findings with and will ensure that ’s point of view or any finding is incorporated into the report.
V. The research will also clearly state its limitations. is a large organization working in over 20 districts and five tribal regions and implements projects with over 15 donors. The present research is carried out in a limited area which may not fully reflect the work of .
VI. Keeping the role of the core, PSU and local teams, in the strategy and learning processes, the researcher, while drawing up a list and documents to be read, and staff to be interviewed, will closely liaise with ’s Management to ensure that comprehensive view emerges which adequately reflects both the environment in which operates and how it addresses each issue.
VII. Keeping in view the security environment in the area, the researcher will not raise questions and issues in his interviews which are misunderstood by the wider stakeholders who facilitated in operating in the area. Moreover, the researcher will keep the management informed about areas he is visiting and questions he is raising. If there is any disagreement he will respect ’s point of view.

Mr. Syed Owais will explain the purpose of his research to every research participant (interviewed) and will formally ask for his/her (interviewee’s) permission in the regard. Furthermore, he will also ask for their permission to record the interviews, i.e., whether to record interviews verbatim in note book, tape recorder, digital recorder (dictaphone) etc. or not.

Mr. Syed Owais will assure the research participants (the interviewees) that their opinions and views would be solely used for the purpose of the stated academic research. He will ensure that under no circumstances, will he disclose or share the data with anyone else except to mention or refer to it in his academic report(s).

Mr. Syed Owais will assure the research participants that their names and identities will neither be disclosed in the research report nor will they be mentioned in any non-academic contexts.
With respect to condition no III (above), it is pertinent to mention that Mr. Syed Owais will solely hold copyrights of his research report and that the organisation will only use it for the purpose of critical appraisal/evaluation and feedback to the researcher.

Syed Owais

Countersigned

PhD Research
Peshawar

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Project Manager (PM) etc.
Appendix 5: Research Information Sheet (English)

Who am I?
I am faculty member in sociology at the University of Peshawar and currently, as PhD student at the University of Warwick (UK), I am conducting PhD research on organisational learning in NGOs in Pakistan.

What's my project about?
My project is about exploring factors that influence/affect learning of development workers in RDO. Specifically, I seek to:
- explore and analyse challenges and issues that might be affecting the developmental activities of the staff members;
- document the application of formal and informal learning experiences of the staff members’ in their development work;
- document the contribution of learning to organisational change;
- analyse the effect(s) of learning on the relationship between community people and staff-members of RDO.

Why am I doing this research?
Up till now no published (Pakistani) study has addressed the issue of organisational learning in NGOs in Pakistan. My research:
- would help in documenting this unknown aspect of development work in Pakistan
- may also help in initiating discussion/debate, e.g., about possibilities for new researches in this direction.

Who will benefit from the study’s findings?
- Policy-makers in development sector.
- Practitioners of development sector.
- Academics engaged in research on development sector in Pakistan.
- Interested community people by helping them develop an appreciative sense of the complexity of development sector.

Who will be taking part in my project?
Anyone and everyone who is directly or indirectly engaged with RDO, e.g.,
- Field-staff (Social organisers, Field Assistants etc.)
• Community Activists/Resource Persons
• President/general secretary/members of a CBO/VO/LSO
• Managers (top-level, mid-level etc.)
• Member of Board of Directors (BoD), GM

**Why should you take part in the project?**
Firstly, the research provides you with the opportunity to openly and candidly share your experience and thoughts about the issue of organisational learning in RDO. Secondly, as a repository of views from a variety of people working in and/or for RDO, the project report will give you a much better picture of the complexity of development sector in it as well as in Pakistan.

**What will be involved if you agree to take part in the study & What Sort of Questions will I be asking you?**
You could take part in the study at your own convenient time. Although the minimum time for participation is one hour, you can withdraw from the interview any time. I would ask you simple questions about your orientation, experience and views on learning in development activities of RDO.

**What will happen with the information you give?**
It will be strictly:

*Confidential:* Your opinions and views will not be shared with anyone at all except in my research reports and academic publications;

*Anonymous:* Your name and identity will not be disclosed not even in my research report.

**If you are willing to participate in this research, please don’t hesitate to contact me by any of the following means.**

Thanks,

**SYED OWAIS**
**Cell No:** 0342-9095198
**Email:** owaiszubair@gmail.com
**Postal Address:** Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan. 25000.
ترقیاتی تنظیموں میں سیکھنے اور سکھائی کے عمل کی محرکات کا جائزہ "کے
حوالے سے ریسچر کے بارے میں معلومات

محترم/محترمی,
مریا تعلق یوپیویرسٹی کی شعبہ سوشیالوجی سے ہے اور میں وارک یوپیویرسٹی (انگریزی) سے
سوشیالوجی میں مدرکی ہے. بلال موضوع پر یہ ایچ ڈی ریسچر کر رہا ہوں.

اس ریسچر میں، میں یہ دیکھنا چاہتا ہوں کہ:

1. آر ڈی او جبی تنظیم جب ترقی کے کام لوگوں کے ساتھ مل کر کرتی ہے تو ان میں یہ کون سی
پیچیدگی سامنے آتی ہے اور ترقی کے کاموں پر ہم کس طرح اثر انداز بھی ہے?

2. آر ڈی او ترقیاتی کاموں میں لوگوں کے ضروریات اور خواہشات کو میں نظر رکھتے ہیں؟

3. آر ڈی او کو ترقیاتی کاموں میں کون سی مشکلات اور رکاوتوں درپس بنی؟

4. لوگوں کو آر ڈی او کے ساتھ کام کرتی ہونے کوونسی مشکلات اور رکاوتوں درپس بین اور کیا ار ذی
او ان مشکلات اور رکاوتیں کو باتچ کی کیہ آئئی اقدامات اہمیتے ہیں؟

اگر آپ آر ڈی او کے ترقیاتی کاموں میں کسی بھی طریقے، سے مسلسل بین یا مسلسل رہے بین تو میں آپ
سے درخواست کرتا ہوں. اپنے قیمتوں وقت کا کچھ حصہ مجھے عناہ کریں. میں آپ سے ملنے بالا
سوالات کے حوالے سے گفتگو کرتا ہوں، عام طور پر گفتگو کا دورانہ 2 گفتگو کا بابتا ہے. لیکن
آپ کسی وقت باتوں کو ختم کر سکتے ہیں. آپ کی راہی اور تجاوز نہ صرف اس ریسچر کیلئے
میکاد اور کارامد ثابت ہونگی یہاں اس کو ترقی کے کاموں میں بہتری لانے کیلئے بہت اہم کہ کے
اسکے گرو.

میں آپ کی بیانیاتی کروادون کے آپ کی راہی اور نظرات میں ساتھ مکمل طور پر محفوظ
ہوگی. اور آپ اک نام اور شناخت بلیک کسی دوسرا شخص، تنظیم یا ادارے کو نیپا بلایا جائے
گا، پہلے اک بیک ہے ریسچر رپورٹ میں بلیک ایکا نام اور آپ کی شناخت نبی لکھوچ نیپا ہوئی جائے گی.

آپ کے قیمتوں وقت کا بیب پہت شکریہ!

سید اوسی
شمع سوشیالوجی
پنڈاری یوپیویرسٹی
0342-9095198
091-9221042
Appendix 7.1: Interview Guide for Staff-members

(n.b. The following list of questions is a uniform topic guide, which was adapted to the job-role, experience and hierarchical position of the staff-members).

I am very thankful to you for your time and the opportunity you gave me to talk with you about your experience of working in RDO. As you can see in the ‘research information sheet’, my research is about exploring challenges that you and your colleagues might have been facing in the course of working for the organisational goals. As I have stated in the information sheet your views and opinions will be completely confidential and any information used in the thesis will be completely anonymised. Now, if you allow me, I would like to record our conversation. It would help me remember what we discuss.

- First of all, can you please tell me in detail about your name, age, designation and role in the organisation? I would also like you to please reflect in detail on your experience of working at all positions on which you have worked as well as the projects in which you have worked for the organisation.
- What do you like about your work and why (personal gratification, social mission, interaction with lots of people etc.)?
- Can you please explain to me in your own terms what are the goals and objectives of RDO and the project in which you are currently working?
- How have been things going in the various projects you have worked in and in the organisation (RDO) since you joined it?
- How do you find interacting with community members during the design, delivery and evaluation of various interventions?
- Do you think, over the years, community members have changed in terms of their preferences for interventions, commitment to their grassroots
organisations and participation in various activities organised by the RDO? If so, how the changes come about?

- How do you find your co-workers (field-level and management) in relation to your duties you have been performing in the organisation in the past and in the present project?

- What innovations have been introduced in the organisation since you joined it and what do you think have been their outcomes for organisational goals and for community members?
Appendix 7.2: Interview Guide for CO/VO/LSO-Members & Leadership

(n.b. questions were moulded according to what the individual or groups of interviewees said during the sessions)

I am very thankful to you for your time and the opportunity to talk to you about your experience of working in/for the organisations formed by RDO. As you can see in the Urdu ‘research information sheet’, my research is about exploring challenges that you and your neighbours might have faced in the course of working for your CO/VO/LSO and RDO. Your views and opinions will be completely confidential and any information used in the thesis will be completely anonymised. If you allow me, I would like to record our conversation. It would help me remember what we discuss.

- I would like you to please tell me about your name, age, educational qualifications. I would also like you to please tell me in as much detail as possible how and for what purpose was your CO/VO/LSO formed?
- When, why and how did you become member of the CO/VO/LSO?
- What interventions and services have you and your organisation received from RDO?
- Can you please tell me as to up till now what interventions have you and/or your organisation received from RDO and what was the procedure of its delivery? Please describe things in as much detail as possible.
- What roles have you been playing in decisions regarding the identification of needs, the delivery of services to the community-members, and the monitoring and evaluation of interventions (schemes)?
- How are decisions regarding RDO’s services and interventions arrived at in your organisation (CO/VO/LSO)?
• How do you see the outputs of RDO’s interventions for you and for your neighbourhood?
• How have been things going between your organisational members and RDO?
• Which things make your relationship with RDO better and in what sense (what is good/bad about it)?
• How have you personally found staff members’ (fieldworkers’ and managers’) interaction with you?
• In what sense can RDO contribute more towards betterment in your life and the life of other organisational members?
• In what ways can RDO’s procedures be improved for needs assessment, types of interventions and delivery mechanisms as well as for long-term and equitable functioning of your CO/VO/LSO?
Appendix 7.3: Interview Guide for Women Community Members (Urdu)

ممبران وومن کمیونٹی آرگنائزیشن/ویلر آرگنائزیشن

1-عمر 2-تعلیم/تعلیمی قابلیت 3-تنظيم کا نام

سول نمبر 1-آپ کب اور کسطرح تنظیم کی ممبر بنیں؟

سول نمبر 2-آپ کن وجوبات کی بناء پر تنظیم مین شامل بو نین؟

سول نمبر 3-آپ کی تنظیم کب اور کسطرح بنی؟

سول نمبر 4-آپ کی تنظیم کن اعراض و مقاصد کی الحصواکلی بیناں گئے؟

سول نمبر 5-آر ذی اونی آپکی تنظیم کلیے کون سی سکیمین، ثرینگن اور دیگرکوکо
سوال نمبر 12- کیا تمام سکیمن، ترینگک اور دیگر خدمات طووفانی وقت پر دی جاتی بیں؟

سوال نمبر 13- کیا برہنہ اور دیگر خدمات طووفانی وقت پر سکیمن، ترینگک اور دیگر خدمات طووفانی وقت پر سکیمن ہیں؟

سوال نمبر 14- کیا سایر مقياس تعداد کے لحاظ سے ساری سکیمن، ترینگک اور دیگر خدمات طووفانی وقت پر سکیمن ہیں؟

سوال نمبر 15- کیا آپ دیگر اور تھرینگک کے میل جول اور روہ کے بارے میں؟ کس طرح محسوس کریں؟

سوال نمبر 16- کیا آپ کی خیال میں اگر آپ دیگر اور تھرینگک کے اپکے ساتھ لحاظ منظوری خدمات کے میں میں سمجھتے ہیں؟

سوال نمبر 17- کیا آپ کی خیال میں اگر آپ دیگر اور تھرینگک کے اپکے ساتھ لحاظ منظوری خدمات کے میں اپکے ساتھ ہیں؟

سوال نمبر 18- کیا آپ کی خیال میں بعض لوگوں کو ترینگک اور دیگر کامون کے لیے امتیازی بنیادوں پر چنا جاتا ہے؟

سوال نمبر 19- کیا آپ کی رائی میں آپ دیگر اور تھرینگک اور دیگر خدمات نے اپکے اپکے خدمات کے لیے منظوری کے بہت وضاحتی؟

سوال نمبر 20- کیا آپ کی خیال میں پاورشیک کی لحاظ سے نیا گھونمکی درجہ بندی کی گنا ہے؟

کون کون سے غلط ہے؟
سوال نمبر 21- آپ نے کہیں کسی ترینگ، سکیم یا دیگر خدمات کے حوالے سے شکاوت یا نا پسندیدگی کا اظہار کیا ہے؟

تو آر ذی اوکی مثبت کیا ردعمل دکھا یا؟

کیا آپ ان کے رد عمل سے خوش یا مطمئن بہ؟؟

(اگر نیز تو کوئی بھی اور کس طرح؟)

کیا آپ کے خیال میں آپ کی تقیید کا کسی ترینگ و غیرے سے علحدگی اس آر ایس پی کی خدمات میں بتوری لا سکتی ہے؟

سوال نمبر 22- کیا آپ کو کسی ترینگ کی سکیم یا دیگر خدمات کی حوالہ سے شکاوت درج کرائے کے بارہ میں ازادری؟؟

طریقہ کار کیا ہے؟

کیا انس شکاوات پر عمل درآمد ہوا ہے؟

سوال نمبر 23- کیا آپ کے خیال میں آپ کی تقیید کا کسی ترینگ میں شمولیت اس لئی کرتی ہے کیوں کہ کوئی اور راه موجود نہ ہو آر ذی او آپکی خواشت، ضرورات اور شکاوت کو سنتی ہے؟

یعنی کیا آپ کے ساتھ کوئی دوسرا راستہ نہیں؟

سوال نمبر 24- آپ تنظیم میں ضرورات کی نشان دہی میں کیا کرا دادا کرتی ہے؟

سوال نمبر 25- سکیم، ترینگ اور دیگر چھزون کے حوالے سے کیا آپ کی تنظیم آپکی رائے کو ترجیح دینے ہے؟

سوال نمبر 26- کیا آپ کے خیال میں آپکی تنظیم بچاؤوی مساوات اور براہری کے اصولوں پر ترینگ و غیرے کیلئے ممیران کو چہتے ہے؟

چنا گا طرفی کار؟ آپ کے تعمیر کے دیگر ممیران کے روابط سے خوش بہ؟

سوال نمبر 27- آپ کی اپنی تنظیم میں بنیئی لااکے کے لئے اور اس کے اعضا و مقاومت کو پاانے کیلئے تجویز کرتی ہیں؟

آپ کے خیال میں آر ذی اواس معاملہ، میں آپکی کس طرح مدد کر سکتی ہے؟

آپ کے خیال میں تنظیم کے دیگر ممیران اس معاملہ، میں آپکی کس طرح مدد گار بھی سکتی ہے؟

سوال نمبر 28- آپ کی دونے تنظیم اور ارگنائزیشن کب اپنی کس طرح موجود میں آئی؟

طریقہ کار کیا؟

کتنے تامل میں بہ؟

سوال نمبر 29- ویل جینک، ویل ارگنائزیشن کے اعضا و مقاومت کے حصول کے لئے بنانے گنتی؟

کس قسم کے انفرادی اور اجتماعی معاملے کو حل کرنے کے لئے کہیں بنانے گنتی؟
سوال نمبر 30- کیا آپ کوئی ویلن ارگنائزیشن کے ابلاکاروں کا پتہ ہے؟

آپکی ویلن ارگنائزیشن مین کون سی کمیٹی (بچھ، ممبران) بھی؟

ویلن ارگنائزیشن کا سترکچر کیا ہے؟

سوال نمبر 31- آپکی ویلن ارگنائزیشن نے اب تک کون سی اجتماعی مسائل کے حل کے لیے کام کیا؟

کس قسم کے مسائل کے لئے، کیا طریقہ کار وضع کیا اور کس کے تعاون سے کیا؟

آپ نے اور دوسرے کسان کی ممبران نے کیا کیا خدمات سرانجام دی؟
## Appendix 8: Goals, Objectives and Interventions of the LDP Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives of the Programme</th>
<th>Categories of Interventions*</th>
<th>Sets of specific interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 1 of the Project</strong>&lt;br&gt;To empower poor/vulnerable groups, reviving community collective action &amp; rebuild community institutions to make claims for their rights.</td>
<td>Identification of Poor Social Mobilisation</td>
<td>1) Poverty Score Card (PSC) Survey 2) Community dialogues 3) Formation of Men/Women Community Organisations (MCOs/WCOs) 4) Community Management Skills training (CMST) 5) Leadership Management Skills training (LMST) 6) Development of community resource persons (CRPs) 7) Formation of village Development Organisations (VDOs/VOs) and Local Support Organisations (LSOs) 8) Manager Conferences and Exposure Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3 of the Project</td>
<td>Social Mobilisation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy and lobbying initiatives to bolster support for long-term strategic needs poor and vulnerable especially women and developing capacity of state actors in participatory approaches/community development.</td>
<td>21) Capacity Building of Government Official in various disciplines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22) Advocacy and Awareness workshops/seminars on participatory development, developing pro-poor plans and policies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23) Coordination Meetings between government and civil society organisations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24) Hardware/technical support and systems development at district and union councils level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from RDO (2009: 3-18)

* Not mentioned in the original project proposal but given here for a summative view of the broader categories of interventions
Appendix 9: Poverty Scorecard Used in LDP
Source: Personal Communication