

Role of Civil Society Organizations in FATA Education

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Abstract

Soon after 9/11, the advent of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in FATA remained focus of discussion among different scholars and stakeholders at different forums. CSOs are considered the messengers of peace and education. These organizations are getting funds from various sources, UN at their top, and invest in the targeted area(s) for the purpose of enhancing the education of a locality. The debate bifurcates CSOs between real objectives persuading and fabricated objectives persuading. Not only those CSOs who are purely working for education but all CSOs are part of this struggle directly or indirectly. This research is focusing on the programs of the CSOs running in FATA and their direct or indirect impact on the education system of the region. The Methodology used for this research is qualitative, comprising direct in-depth interviews and FGDs with students, local population and other stakeholders.

Key Words: Civil Society, Education, Youth, FATA

Introduction

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is the most volatile region, after 9/11, at the North-West of Pakistan which connects Afghanistan through Durand line. The insurgency and its counter operations by the Pakistan military caused this region's socio-political, economic and infrastructure smashed. The region became a focal point for domestic and international scholars who regularly write over FATA; its society, culture, politics, nature and structure in post 9/11 context. The sympathizers find a way to enter the region which includes national and international Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). There are almost 42 NGOs, other than UNO and her agencies, based in Peshawar (Peshawar NGOs, 2014). Most of these CSOs are based in Peshawar but the purpose to serve the tribesmen in FATA or those who had displaced due to military operations. Despite of International CSOs, 37 local NGOs are working solely in FATA. Majority of these CSOs have formed by the local people, mostly tribal or belong to adjacent areas of FATA (FATA based

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native NGOs, 2014). These CSOs are working with multiple programs and slogans; including, health, infrastructure, women empowerment, etc. but all of these CSOs committed to spread education in FATA with one way or another.

Before proceeding to the central theme of this research, it is necessary to know what the Civil Society is. It is defined by different scholars in different ways. Dr. Ejaz Akram, Professor at LUMS as the institutional sphere that rests in between the state and the sphere of the family (Akram, 2010). A working definition is, “those institutions which are non-governmental, non-partisan and working solely for citizen needs.” As discussed earlier that the CSOs are working there in FATA with multiple mottos but here in this article the scope is limited to education system of the area.

Development of CSOs in FATA

Since 1980s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as “an important force on the world stage working to democratize the decision-making processes, protect human rights and provide necessary services to the most needy” (Ravia, 1997) and a vehicle for the “empowerment” of citizens and a room for “consensus-seeking” (Styen, 2004). Civil society is thus a pre-condition of democracy or “democratization”. Before 9/11 majority of the tribesmen would harbor a lot of doubts about various CSOs; they would discourage the participation of their fellow tribesmen; they would consider such NGOs as a tool of the government or of the Western nations; consequently, such NGOs were almost non-existent in FATA. In the changed scenario, the tribesmen’s mentality has undergone a change and they have increased their participation in the activities of various NGOs (Ohanyan, 2012). After 9/11 the first NGO stepped in was the Community Appraisal and Motivation Program (CAMP), established in 2002, it has played a marvelous role in creating awareness against the cruel and draconian law of FCR. Presently, almost a dozen NGOs, including that of the UN, are active in FATA; they work on a variety of projects of infrastructure development including health, primary education, sanitation, communication, livestock, female-empowerment, political awareness, etc. It means that, in the wake of 9/11, the tribesmen have been exposed to the fast-spreading effects of globalization taking on various modern trends. Here, I will try to mention some prominent CSOs and their field of work.

The initiative taken by the Community Appraisal and Motivation Program (CAMP) in 2002 based in Bajaur Agency. Besides her struggle for awareness in Pakistani community about FCR she also works in the education sector in FATA. Another think-tank is the FATA Research Center (FRC) who studied FATA civil society in-depth and doing ground research on the developments after 9/11 in FATA, based in Islamabad. There is a number of think-tanks all over the country who working over FATA. Although, these

organizations are working over FATA but, ironically, most of them do not have even a single graduate from FATA.

There are 37 CSOs based at different agencies and FRs of FATA; such as, Society for Promotion of Education and Employment for Disables (SPEED), ZALAND, CEDO, Community Uplift Programme (CUP), HEARD, AAS, SAWERA, FRD, CADO, SADA, Tribal Right Watch, PEACE, Life and Hope, Mashal Development Organization, Citizen Rights and Sustainable Development (CRSD), Society for Rights and Development (SRD), Community Initiative Support Services (CISS), Pakistan International Human Rights Organization PIHRO and so many (FATA based native NGOs, 2014). Most of these organizations are based in a single tribal Agency and their domain is limited to that agency. An official of FDMA said it was encouraging to note that locals were forming NGOs and Community Based Organization (CBO). He said formation of such organizations at local levels was an indication that civil society was taking root in Fata and the people were preparing themselves for taking responsibility (Ali Z. , 2012). To check the activities of these CSOs, government passed regulations to regulate the funds and expenditures of these CSOs (Amin, 2014). Besides, NGO also formed by the local-tribesmen to look the activities of CSOs and to provide opportunities and other frame of work. The Tribal NGOs Consortium (TNC) was formed in 2009 in order to facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and communication among FATA-based CSOs for the promotion of peace and development. (Tribal NGOs Consortium, 2010).

Critical Analysis of CSOs in the Field of Education

It is a universal truth that illiteracy and unemployment among youth create frustration in them that leads to aggression and, ultimately ends in violence. This illiteracy and unemployment proved in providing active forces for militancy in the region. When interview the local population in FATA, we found divergent views regarding the role of CSOs in the field of education. The main questions were asked; what do you know about CSOs? How do you explain a CSO? Your time with CSO, salary, position and why you left etc. It might be right to say that the quantitative rise of the CSO sector in world politics has largely neglected the qualitative impact of that development (Ohanyan, 2012). The problem is that some CSOs have established their monopoly in FATA and they are working in health, education, IDPs, conflict, communication and livelihood sectors simultaneously without having professional and qualified staff (Mohmand, 2015). The recruits of these NGOs are found, mostly among the students of higher secondary school and bachelor degree holders. Only a small number of them are graduates. But, none of them possess a post according to their qualification in an NGO. The skilled and experienced graduates are not utilized properly. The selection to the higher posts are based on the approach to the 'high-profile', this approach either to the bosses within NGOs or to the higher

governmental officials. The person with high approach gets higher posts ((FGD) F. G., 2015). The higher posts are filled by the outsiders in these CSOs and the locales are kept away from these posts, although they have enough qualification for those posts. These graduates demanded many time from the political administration to include the local graduates in CSOs that they may get employment and not remain a burden on their families, but in vain ((FGD) F. G., Role of CSOs in Educational Sector, 2015).

When interviewed, a lecturer in Government Postgraduate College Khar, Bajaur Agency replied that he is tutoring Bachelor level classes. He found most of the students absent from the class. They attended classes only once a week. When inquired the reason of absence, the same response he received from each student, “Sir I am serving in so and so NGO, I have to support my family, let me continuing my job; if it is not possible then I will not be able to come to college any more”. So, as per college regulations we did accordingly to such responses from the students, those who were in work with NGOs, were quite reasonable for the teacher as he knew financial conditions of the families that were dependent on these students. But on the other hand we have to assure their presence in classes as per college rules (Khan, 2015).

Apparently, these organizations are working to spread education by getting people aware of its importance, but it is going contrary because this campaign itself a cause of getting people away from education by recruiting the youths. When arranged a Focus Group Discussion with the personnel who working with these CSOs I found that most of them had left their education in secondary school or in under graduation levels. They are of the view that these NGOs are offering a good package for them. Mostly they are working under Rs. 15000 which is a good amount for those unemployed and poor tribesmen. The wages are receiving by their bosses are in lacs. They use these innocent students for their different activities. The regular student when find a job in any NGO, he blindly join that and leave all his studies. He considers himself that it is time to earn and there will be difficulties in finding a job in future ((FGD) F. G., Future of Youngsters in CSOs, 2015). If someone asks that why these students are working in low wages with these NGOs? The answer is quite clear as they are unemployed and poor. They have to support their families and their parents also expecting so, because, the parents do not know significance of higher education. For them, this amount is enough in cash. According to a survey conducted by Fata Research Center with the title of “Extremism and Radicalization” in 2012, that unemployment among the youth is one of the key socio-economic issues of the area. FRC surveyed that 67% population are of the view that they do not have adequate opportunities to find a job (Ali D. A., 2012).

One thing might be clear that the advent of CSOs brought the feature of dependency and laziness in FATA youth. When they find a job in a CSO they totally indulge in it and do not search or care for their future, as the duration of

service in an NGO is very limited, hardly three years. When he retires from an organization (mostly kicked out), he becomes dishearten and lose his courage. In the words of Hegel, civil society creates a universal dependence of man on man. Attainment of selfish ends makes them interdependent. No man is independent by himself; each finds himself involved in the process of production, exchange and consumption and in this way fulfills each other's selfish ends (Hegel, 1952). The CSOs fulfill their selfish ends and make the youths dependent, left them in mid of their way, without any future planning.

When I inquired from an ex-employ of Civil Society, he responded in an aggressive mode, "civil societies are working there to promote education and to bring awareness among tribesmen regarding education is baseless. None of them had encouraged any student to keep his study continue. If a student become habitual to earn money in his teenage then frustration does not allow him to study more and his direction changes from college towards city for common labor." He further said that he joined National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) soon after the completion of his secondary school, only for RS. 1500 salary and left his school in the hope that he will get good amount with passage of time but unfortunately, the program ended and his hopes drowned. Now, he is in search of common labor in city and cannot go back to join study (Jan, 2015).

Last year, in 2014, a society of Bajaur graduates was formed. The main objective of the society was to demand local recruitment in CSOs. In this regard they have arranged several meetings with the political administration. The members of this society, mostly, remained part of CSOs but now they are jobless. They have been replaced (as they remain for maximum time in an organization their salary increase with the passage of time. Organizations replace them with a fresh candidate to save the incremental salary) or they have lost their jobs with the completion of a specific project of CSOs ((FGD) F. G., 2015). In contrast, Fazal Saeed, development expert from FATA, revealed that the non-locals are given priority over locals because the locals do not have enough experience to run a project or to serve at higher post. There is, first, a need for skills development for the people living in FATA (Saeed, 2016).

When asked a clerk of the government college, he replied, "The government (Political Agent fund) pay only Rs 5000 per graduate student annually". In this critical era of inflation this amount is too little for a graduate student and is insufficient even for their textbooks. There is no scholarship for the students in any institution inside in FATA (Rasool, 2015).

Mariam Bibi, chairwoman of an NGO, Khwendo Kor, which runs various development projects in FATA, including South Waziristan Agency, said there was a negative perception about the activities of many CSOs operating in FATA and that was correct to some extent. She said the government officials were issuing permits to CSOs to work in FATA on personal contact and that was a wrong practice. She further said that this is the government's responsibility to

properly verify credibility and record of CSOs before issuing NOCs for launching activities in tribal areas (Ali Z. , 2012). Although, there is a governed body, FDMA, who has daughter departments; like, Social Sector Department, which is responsible for the matters relating to education, social welfare, women empowerment and Zakat and Usher (Social Sector Department, 2014). The body is also responsible to check the activities and programs of CSOs in FATA.

In present scenario, there are challenges for governmental as well as non-governmental organizations. According to the accessible documents, at least 551 schools were destroyed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Frontier Regions (FR), including, 362 boys' schools and 189 girl's schools, in 2013-14 due to ongoing militancy and floods. This was revealed in official papers issued by the FATA Secretariat concerning the Annual Development Program (ADP) for 2014-15. However, Governor Mehtab Abbasi has issued special orders to give priority to the education sector in the budget and reconstruct the schools destroyed in Fata. A large number of schools are being constructed and special emphasis has been given on the education of girls (Zia, 2014).

Conclusion

The youth, if provided opportunities for education and jobs, will return a rich share in peace and development and state building. In these critical situations the governmental organizations and CSOs are to be serious in their respective programs. The purpose of CSO should not to earn but to show work on the grounds. As mentioned earlier that CSOs are work for the betterment of citizens.

The activities of CSOs in FATA are admirable in these critical situations. High responsibilities fall on the personnel who belong to the region and are part of CSOs. These CSOs do not need a governed body to check them but 'morality' is the sovereign authority which could be the best to show their devotion to this paralyzed region.

- The CSOs should utilize and train the young graduates of the region in modern professional, industrialized and democratic era.
- The CSOs should give priority to local graduates over non-local. Tribal youths have the potential to do their job in the best way.
- For those students who are working/ part of these CSOs should frame a policy in which they could continue their studies as well as earn money, just like the youth do in the settled areas.
- The CSOs individually should take the responsibility of providing scholarship to the enrolled students within FATA
- There should be a scrutiny and inspection of CSOs that the duty is not affecting the studies of youths working with them.

- The government should frame a policy in which the regular students have enough time to keep their education continue with job in CSO or the government should provide them enough monthly scholarship for the students who study within FATA that the parents may not consider these students a burden on their economy. Although, government has provided opportunities for the students of FATA in institutions outside of FATA but within FATA, those students who could not secure admission in institutions outside FATA, there is no such a stipend or scholarship.
- We hope our respected Governor Mehtab Abbasi will actualize his words “to give priority to the education sector in the budget and reconstruct the schools destroyed in Fata”.

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