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Female Education and Development in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan

How Can a Sustainable Female Education and Development Programme be Introduced by a Women's NGO in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan?

An Action Research Project

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Abstract

The work described in this thesis followed a feasibility study undertaken for my MA in 2002. The main question has remained the same: 'How Can a Women's NGO Introduce a Sustainable Female Education and Development Programme in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA)? '

The aim of the research was to test the ideas developed in the MA by trying them out in FATA. The study involved action research, a participatory approach (I am myself a tribal woman) and a wide variety of research methods.

The thesis outlines the case for female education in developing countries and the context for the action research. It describes the history of FATA, the social, economic and political conditions, the causes and effects of the worsening security situation and the changing power dynamics within the territory. It also outlines the position of tribal women within FATA, their poverty, their oppression, the lack of knowledge about them and the low priority given to their needs.

The action research was based on the work of an NGO, Khwendo Kor (KK), which implemented my ideas in FATA. The thesis describe the preparations that were made at personal and KK levels before going to the villages, the selection of areas and villages and the methods and strategies that were used to engage both with those with power and the village men and women.

The project encountered extreme resistance. Nevertheless it showed that it was possible female education and development in FATA on a sustainable basis, and also identified lessons and challenges for the future.

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I also sincerely thank my colleagues in Khwendo Kor without whom the action research in FATA could not have been implemented. They wholeheartedly took up this challenge and faced all kinds of risks, including threats to their lives as a result. All the staff involved deserve my sincere acknowledgement and appreciation. In particular Ms Aneela Qamar, Director of Programmes for Khwendo Kor, and Mr Khalid Usman, Regional Manger in FR Bannu, were always ready to send me information for my research in time to meet my needs, while Mr Mian Asghar also sent me on line numerous materials related to FATA.

It would be unjust if I do not mention all my dear friends in the UK, most of whom are also part of the FROK (UK Friends of KK) charity. They showed great understanding and restraint in not involving me in the charity work while I was working on my thesis but they were always there for me and I could moan to them for hours about its agonies.

Last but not least I am grateful to my sister Robina, daughter Faiqa, Ibrash Pasha Regional Manager KK District Dir, my son Farid and his wife Marya. All of them shared the responsibility of looking after my son Asad who needed attention due to his health, while I was completing this study.

Author's Declaration

Many people helped me to complete this action research. The NGO, Khwendo Kor (KK), shouldered the responsibility for the action itself. The organization did not work in FATA before. It made special efforts to organize the financial, institutional and human resources necessary for implementing the project. It also undertook a study in FATA for which I supervised the main researcher, Mr Mian Asghar. I have used the data and the literature he collected.

Mr Khalid Usman, the Regional Manager and supervisor of KK's projects in FATA, provided me with updated information on progress. I have extensively referred to his feedback, updates and accounts of KK's reactions to unexpected events. Ms Aneela Qamar, the director of KK Programs, ensured that I got all KK's quarterly progress reports sent to project donors.

English is not my native language. Although I am a mature woman, my long work experience had not prepared me for the task of writing a sizeable social research thesis. My supervisor, Professor Ian Sinclair and his wife Elma were my mentors for this difficult assignment. They helped me to clarify my thoughts, translate my ideas into coherent themes and cluster them in a logical way. To my surprise, I learned from them that long and sophisticated words were not impressive and that short and simple sentences could influence the reader better. They insisted that I learned to write clearly, logically and coherently, a task I still find difficult. Elma, in particular, has edited the thesis from the point of view of its English, whereas Ian has supervised all aspects of the work and helped me to give it a final shape and structure.

I take full responsibility for initiating the project, for its key ideas, for organizing the collection of data, for its analysis and interpretation, for the overall direction of the action research, and for the content of the thesis in all its parts.

Chapter 1
Introduction to the Research

Introduction

This research is about a project concerned with female education and development in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of North West Pakistan. This chapter describes why I wanted to do it, why I believe it is of more than personal interest, and how I have written it up.

Personal reasons for undertaking the research

The motivation behind the research is manifold. The foremost one is personal. I was born in a Wazir tribal family in a small village. My birth as a third daughter was disappointing for all close relatives but more so for my mother who had failed again to produce a male issue. She was still in pain and asking for help but the women around her were showing their grief over my birth. They believed my mother was pretending to cover her sorrow. A few hours later when my twin brother was born the village resounded with gunshot in jubilation. My aunt has told me that I was left on a bed and forgotten for that whole day.

As I grew up I was trained to take care of my twin brother. For a short time, I was put in his English medium school so that he got used to the new environment and but then, as money was short, I was shifted to a government school exclusively for girls.

Patriarchy is so deeply entrenched in the tribal society that honour killings are celebrated and battering women is common. There were two examples of this in my own family.

As a result of rumors in the village, one of my female first cousins and her male cousin were both shot at by her brother for an alleged affair. The man was killed but she managed to escape and had to run for her life for a long time until very recently when the 'head money' (the money owed to a family for settling a blood feud) could be paid to the man's family.

In a similar case a second cousin of mine was shot dead by her brother who was given the gun by her mother. Later when police came to their *hujra* (the village place where men sit) all the tribal elders and the men of her family unanimously took a stand in favor of the act and the police left saying it was decided as per tribal norms.

As can be seen**,** I have been experiencing and surviving extreme patriarchy since birth. That said, it would be unjust if I did not put things in perspective. My father was among the first in our village who took the courageous decision to have his daughters educated. He gave his daughters a love and care of which no or very few girls of my age and village could dream. He struggled hard to strike a balance between his natural human nature refined with education and exposure and the harsh tribal background with which he proudly identified.

My education helped me to deal with many hardships in my married life. It enabled me to become a professional woman pioneering a women's Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Khwendo Kor (KK) in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). It has also helped me to analyze why it is that I am here, sitting in the UK and writing my thesis while my female first cousins back in my village, like women throughout the tribal areas, live the life from which I have escaped. My experiences have made the desire to help in the education and development of tribal women very close to my heart. My position as chief executive in an NGO seemed to give me a chance to bring this about. A scholarship at the University of York gave me a chance to think about how it might be done.

Some wider reasons for undertaking the research

I believe that this study is not of merely personal interest.

First, there is a dearth of research about tribal Pashtun women undertaken by tribal women themselves. The difficulties in getting insight to their life were enormous. These were faced at all stages, in finding information in the literature reviewed, in reaching and engaging the women, and in seeking to place my findings in the context of a literature almost entirely written by men. Clearly much more is needed than this small piece of work. I believe, however, that even this can make a contribution.

Secondly, the geography and position of FATA has historically given it great political importance. In the 19th century it played the role of a buffer zone for the British Empire in its efforts to contain the Russians. Shortly after the formation of Pakistan the tribal people fought the Kashmir *Jihad*. In the 1980s FATA played a crucial role in the American support for the *Mujahadeen*. And since September 2001 (9/11) in particular, it has been at the heart of the war on terror. This action research is an effort to try out if something is possible for women's education and development in such a war torn area and a society where they are in great danger of being forgotten. In a small way the research may do something to better their position but also to lessen the source of tensions which are dangerous both to them and to the wider world. Some of its lessons may also be relevant in other situations of this kind.

Thirdly, the research is relevant to a central issue in the Muslim world. Islam came at a dark time in history when burying females alive on birth was the norm of the day (see Quran 16:58-59 which forbids the practice). It came as a religion of inclusiveness and a unifying force for humanity, including parts of Judaism and Christianity as an integral part of the Islamic creed. Strikingly it brought women into the mainstream of all spheres of life. The Quran provides women with human rights equal to those of men. During the early period of Islam women without any hesitation could directly communicate with Prophet Mohammad. His historic last sermon beside other human rights mentions kindness to women.

Sadly the position of women in the Islamic world today is not so fortunate. Muslim societies are often illiterate and female literacy is particularly low. As a result the interpretations of the Quran have been mainly done by men from their own experiences and point of view. This viewpoint reflects the poverty, traditions and political upheavals of many Muslim societies and the political aspirations and needs of Muslim men. In these circumstances the simplicity of the message of Islam has given it enormous power and influence but has also been distorted. In the consequent militarization and politicization of Islam, women have often experienced a denial of their rights.

Nevertheless despite all the disagreements among the various sects in Islam (Sunnis, Shias and the various divisions of these groups) there is agreement on the rights that the religion gives to women, albeit not an agreement that leads to practical results. This project explores if the basic framework of Islam can be used to help with the development of Muslim women so that they can take their place in a modern world.

Finally this piece of work may help me and perhaps others to see if and how analytic and research techniques primarily developed in and for fairly stable western societies may be applied in very different situations and cultures such as those in FATA. In this way the thesis may also make a small contribution to translating the achievements of Western social science and social policy to the developing world.

Developing the research

In 2001/2 I was privileged to get the Annemarie Schimmel Scholarship in Pakistan for sponsoring my higher study in the UK. This allowed me to do a feasibility study on how a women's NGO could introduce female education in FATA, as part of my MA thesis. This feasibility study helped me to gain a better understanding of FATA and suggested further action research along with practical guidelines for how it could be done.

Equipped with enhanced knowledge of FATA and the confidence of the potential support that I could get from the NGO Khwendo Kor in actually applying the approach I had developed, I went back to the Annemarie Schimmel Scholarship Committee and the University of York and asked to extend my study by one more year and move forward my MA to the next level of a M.Phil degree. Both very kindly agreed and allowed me to accomplish the action research.

The main question for this study remained more or less the same: How Can a Women's NGO Introduce a Sustainable Female Education and Development Program in FATA? The underlying assumption this time was to test the ideas developed in the MA by actually doing things in FATA. In this way it was hoped to provide a further description of the difficulties faced by the tribal women, the opportunities and challenges for an NGO working for their development; and the practical strategies that might enable success in this and similar situations.

I went back to Peshawar in late 2002 and started planning for the action research. As part of this, I participated in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) consultancies for FATA undertaken in collaboration with the government of Pakistan. This helped in allowing me not only to visit many FATA agencies and conduct semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups of tribal women but also to meet officials related to FATA in several government departments. It also gave me access to the government's official data about FATA.

Over this time I was also successful in gaining both the commitment of my agency to this project and also funding from Action Aid (AA) in Pakistan. With their help, I was able to carry out further preparatory work and finally get the project under way. We are now working in three of the main tribal areas namely FR Bannu, and the agencies of Khyber and Bajaur. We are operating in thirty-five villages and have been successful in establishing thirty-six educational projects, including adult literacy centers for tribal village women, community based learning centers for working children and girls' primary schools, with a total enrollment of 1657 in

early 2007. The thesis is about the background to the project, how we did it and the lessons we have learnt.

Outline of thesis

The initial chapters (2 to 7) outline the methods that I used and the background to the research. Chapter 2 uses the international literature to make the case for women's education in developing countries. Chapter 3 describes my research methods and strategy. Chapter 4 describes the history of FATA, the social, economic and political conditions, the causes and effects of the worsening security situation and the changing power dynamics within the territory. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 outline the position of tribal women within FATA, the challenges facing an NGO wishing to work with them and the lessons that I drew from this at the end of my MA.

The next chapters tell the story. They describe the preparations that were made at personal and KK levels before going to the villages, the selection of areas and villages and the methods and strategies that were used to engage both with those with power and with the village men and women. The chapters also discuss the kinds of difficulties which were faced by KK as an organization and by the village women and men. In the course of the project KK had to handle some very difficult events and there is further discussion of the reactions to these and the current progress of the project.

The last chapter brings together the research and analyses it in relation to the lessons learned and the way these might be applied elsewhere in similar situations.

A Note on Terminology, Referencing and Quotation

This thesis is about the tribal areas. The people who live in these areas are known as Pashtun. They are part of the people commonly known as Pathan. Other Pathans live in the settled areas and are known as Pukhtun. Pashtun people speak the Pushtu language, while the official languages of Pakistan are Urdu and English. The meaning of Urdu and Pushtu words that are used in the thesis is either obvious from the context or explained the first time the words appear. I have also given a glossary. I have followed a similar procedure with abbreviations.

The published literature on recent events in FATA is not large. For much of the time I have been doing this research I have been living in Peshawar and did not have access to an English academic library. For both these reasons I have made considerable use of the internet. I have always noted the date on which I accessed the reference and the date of publication where this is possible. In giving direct quotations from the web I have not been able to quote a page reference.

A further problem relates to the standard instructions for referencing. Guidance for M.Phil students requires them not to mention issue numbers as the page reference is normally sufficient. In the case of some Pakistani publications this instruction is inadequate. These publications number pages within issues and the issue is therefore essential information. I have followed the M.Phil instructions as far as I can but not where this would result in an incomplete reference.

Finally, I should say something about the accuracy of the quotations. Those from books or articles written in English are obviously verbatim and use the spelling employed by the author. Khwendo Kor uses English for most memos, minutes, reports and emails and where I have quoted these, I have not changed the text unless the meaning would not be clear to an English audience. If there was a danger that this was so, I have changed punctuation without acknowledgement. I signify other changes by using square brackets around words I have inserted and the use of dots for omitted words.

Many of the quotations in this study are translated from Urdu or Pushtu. Some of them are based on notes taken at the time where I tried as far as possible to write

down what the speaker said. Others are based on memory or summarise 'life stories' that took up many more words than I have been able to produce. Occasionally, but always with explanation, I have put together notes and memories of the kind of thing that people said and reported this as direct speech. For all these reasons I am conscious that the speech is not as accurately reported as would have been the case if I had had a tape recorder. I am, however, quite confident that I have accurately recorded the flavor and essence of what was said.

Chapter 2

The International Literature: Female Education A Potential for Development and Change

Introduction

My MA and present work beside other things describe the difficulties of FATA and of tribal women in particular. As will be seen, the literacy rate in FATA is very low, the economic opportunities are negligible; there is danger, violence and crime; democratic, political institutions are missing; the rule of law does not run. Women are disadvantaged in almost every respect. The point of my current work is to contribute towards changing this situation through action research based in an NGO and focused on women's development in general and on their education in particular.

As background to the action research this chapter draws from my previous literature review and from additional literature reviewed from other developing countries. It looks at the case for education as a human right; at the role education has played in personal and societal development, and at how female education in particular contributed to that. It also considers the difficulties of introducing education in developing countries, at the role and difficulties of NGOs in doing this, and the case for seeing education as a part but not a sole part in overall development.

Education, a Basic Human Right

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Declaration was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The right to basic education is clearly stated in Article 26*:*

> (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
>
> (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Various UN Conventions and Declarations reflect these concerns, for example:

> 'The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) reiterated the commitment of earlier declarations and other international instruments, and specifically states in Article 13: '*Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all'.'* (Lynch, 1997: 36)

Most of the world's religions also emphasise the importance of education. Most relevantly for my purposes this is true of Islam.

> 'Quran puts the highest emphasis on the importance of acquiring knowledge. That knowledge has been at the core of Islamic world-view from the very beginning is attested to…the first revelation Surah 96: Al'Alaq: 1-5 received by the Prophet Mohammad…asking rhetorically if those without knowledge can be equal to those with knowledge the Quran exhorts believers to pray for advancement in knowledge. The famous prayer of the Prophet Mohammad was "Allah grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things" and one of the best known of all traditions (*ahadiths*) is "Seek knowledge even though it be in China' (Hassan, no date)

The question arises why education should be regarded as a human right. Tisdell (1997) suggests that one of the significant reasons that primary education has been declared as a human right relates to the proven difficulties illiterates face in coping with the demands of modernisation and their consequent fear of loss of dignity and protection of their own interests. He goes on to suggest:

> 'Investment in such education is profitable both from an individual's private point of view and socially.' (Tisdell, 1997: 34)

We will look at these two types of benefit separately.

Education for personal growth

Sometimes the argument is that education is a key element in a good life. Jacobs, Macfarlane and Asokan (1997), for example, argue that the accumulation of wealth in the form of infrastructure, oil, land, conveniences, technology and resources are the means of the development rather development itself. They say:

> "Development is the process of human beings developing. It is the energy of people seeking to fulfill their aspirations .that serves as its driving force."

They go on to argue that education is a key element in both personal and societal development.

> 'It is the central instrument for making the past discoveries and experience of humanity more and more conscious and accessible for application by society to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future.'

In a rather similar way Sen (2003), a Nobel economics laureate, argues that:

> 'The most basic issue relates to the elementary fact that illiteracy and innumeracy are forms of insecurity in themselves. Not to be able read or write

> or count or communicate is a tremendous deprivation. The extreme case of insecurity is the certainty of deprivation, and the absence of any chance of avoiding that fate. The first and most immediate contribution of successful school education is direct reduction of this basic deprivation – this extreme insecurity.'

Denial of basic education is thus equal to the denial of other basic human needs such as water, food, and human security.

In addition primary education contributes to the earning power of individuals and to the health of their families. In a series of articles between the 1970s and 2002, Psacharopoulos and his colleagues have looked at the apparent effect of primary education on the earnings of individuals in (in the latest article) 98 developing countries (cited by World Bank, no date). The benefits vary and are less in the more developed countries. Nevertheless they are everywhere substantial and they are accompanied by evidence that education is associated with greater productivity among farmers and better health in the families of educated women (World Bank, no date).

Education for Societal Development

> 'Development can be defined as an upward directional movement of society from lesser to greater levels of energy, efficiency, quality, productivity, complexity, comprehension, creativity, mastery, enjoyment and accomplishment.' (Jacobs, Macfarlane and Asokan, 1997)

Worldwide, education is considered to be one of the most important variables for judging the level of development of any society. According to Rostow's (1960) idea of economic progress, a predominantly agrarian society has to go through stages of economic growth, moving towards a pre take-off stage which manifests itself in the form of increased agricultural productivity, an enlarged and effective infrastructure

base, a change in people's mentality and the emergence of an entrepreneurial class. Education is widely seen as playing a key role in this development.

> 'An overt link between literacy and development was provided by Anderson's (1966) claim that a society requires a 40% literacy rate to enable it to enter Rostow's (1960) 'take-off' stage. Collectively, these understandings provided educational and economic legitimacy to the incorporation of literacy as a key variable in the project of social modernisation.' (Rassool, 1999:81)

According to the World Bank (2006), education for all is crucial for the overall development of a people:

> 'Good quality education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth. Investment in education has many benefits for people, society and the world as a whole. Some of the major benefits of Education include: It enables people to read, reason, communicate and make informed choices.'

Education in varying forms is thus seen as a panacea for almost all social problems and as a means to trigger a societal transformation.

> 'Literacy, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation but it is an essential instrument for all social change.' (1977 Declaration of Persepolis, cited by Sweetman, 1998: 4)

In the post-colonial period, particularly in the West and mainly after World War II, international agencies such as UNESCO, the World Bank, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller, bilateral aid and national agencies have all emphasised and massively invested in education in developing countries.

> 'They argued persuasively that the school model imported from the developed nations was crucial in assuring the evolution of Third World nations from various levels of backwardness to the desired stages of modernity.' (Berman, 1997: 138)

Many studies have been undertaken to look at the returns resulting from investment in education. Some of these relate to primary education, and support Tisdell's (1997) assertion that high rates of return or yield continue to be earned from investment in primary education.

The World Bank (no date) cites some contrary evidence. Statistical studies of school enrolment rates have apparently failed to show that better performing developing countries have more children in school. The Bank discusses some possible reasons for this (inaccurate information, delays in the time taken for the investment to bear fruit, varying effects in different countries). It also argues that studies that take account of the output of education (e.g. literacy rates) do show the expected effect. Overall it sees no reason to contradict the consensus view that primary education benefits the individual socially and economically, reduces poverty and inequality, and benefits the health and overall economy of society as a whole.

Other evidence emphasises the importance of female education and we shall turn to that next.

Female Education: A Human Right

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1981) "addresses the rights of women to equality of access to all available educational opportunities" (cited by Lynch, 1997: 36). Article 10 states that parties should take measures "aimed at reducing, at the earliest time, any gap in education existing between men and women" (Lynch, 1997: 36-37). Likewise, the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1990)

specifically addressed the need for education for girls and women and the elimination of gender stereotyping. The majority of developing countries, including Pakistan, are signatories to these Conventions and Declarations.

Writing on the empowerment of women, Ankerbo and Hoyda (2003) echo Tisdell's distinction between personal and societal reasons for these rights.

> *'First* of all education gives personal benefits for the individual in terms of self-confidence leading to motivation and interests in society. Social interactions are easier when persons are capable of reading a newspaper about social and political issues in the community and the rest of the World… The *fifth* effect of education and literacy enables oppressed groups in a society to become politically organized. Being a larger group makes it easier to insist on ones rights and demands concerning social and politically issues. An organized group achieves visibility in the society and is harder to oppress. The ability to resist oppression not only concerns disadvantaged groups in society, but education does also have positive effects within families when girls are being educated (Dreze & Sen 2002; 39).'

Again, we will deal first with the personal benefits.

Female Education: the Personal Benefits

The argument for female education is partly that it enhances women's social mobility, self esteem and self confidence. Educated women can better communicate and articulate their point of view. Experiences from the developing countries show that education could play a role in their empowerment.

Ankerbo and Hoyda (2003) suggest:

> ‘Seeing poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities instead of simply lowness of income allows for a better understanding of the disadvantages and unequal opportunities that women face in different contexts and allows for a better incorporation of the needs of individual women.’

According to Olakulein and Ojo (2006), a growth in literacy is at the centre of women’s empowerment in Nigeria and citing UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 1994) they say:

> ‘…education opens the opportunity and choice for women. When women are given the requisite education, relevant to their needs and environment, they will gradually become more visible and recognised in the mainstream of activities both at home and in society at large. Given the fact that education enhances a person’s sense of self-worth, confidence and also creates an awareness of capacity, women will become more assertive of their roles in social activities and take initiatives for themselves rather than wait for the decisions to be made for them.’

An important point for this thesis is that education is only likely to benefit women economically if the conditions are right. For example, educated women may not be able to get better paid jobs if the market discriminates against them. The approach to development therefore has to be holistic and not focussed on education alone.

> ‘Precise outcomes are shaped by power relations in local markets, by culture, and by political decisions. Where women face unequal access to productive resources and services, and where women earn less than men for doing similar work, the scope for realising the potential gains of education is restricted.’ (Geiger, 2002: 5)

Despite this limitation Ankerbo and Hoyda (2003) suggest that female education can provide more than purely economic benefits:

> ‘Deprivation of girls or women can be more usefully checked by looking at capability deprivation in terms of mortality, under-nourishment, medical neglect or illiteracy instead of looking at family income, which may be distributed unequally – for example in favour of the male members of the family (Sen 1999:89). Many girls and women are – as mentioned - deprived of the opportunity of education and thus deprived of basic capabilities such as being able to read and write .’

Mehrotra (2003) similarly goes beyond purely economic benefits, including among the multiple advantages of female education later marriages, family planning leading to smaller family size, fewer maternal deaths, and more frequent use of health and other facilities. Tomasevski (2003) agrees:

> ‘Successful prolongation of girls schooling has been proven to delay marriages and child bearing. Thus it compliments and strengthens efforts to eliminate child marriages if designed to do so and effectively implemented.’

Female Education: Societal Development

One of the significant indicators of under-development is the prevalence of poverty and a direct link has been established between poverty and the level of female education in a society.

> ‘The lowest enrolment of girls - and the largest gender gaps - are inevitably in the poorest and the least economically developed areas, especially in rural communities where educational provision is poor, among children of the poorest families.’ (Brock and Gammish, 1991, quoted by Leach, 1998: 13)

Particular importance has been placed on female education as a means of changing the status of countries from under-developed to developed and modernising the

behaviour and attitudes of their people (Inkeles, 1974, quoted by McGinn and Cummings, 1997: 29).

> 'In societies throughout the world, education is seen as not only offering a path to formal employment…but is popularly associated with ideas about 'modern'…The education of girls has been seen by donors as having a valuable impact on 'modernisation' at family level, as an instrument for promoting development' (Sweetman, 1998: 4)

O'Brien (1997:183) suggests that failure to ensure that girls are educated as well as boys may undermine the educational project:

> 'The fundamental link between education and development is no longer questioned…It is now accepted that where equality is not achieved then the education of males does not have the benefits expected.'

The inclusion of girls in education may be even more important than including boys, a view supported by Tisdell (1997:38). In 2006, the World Bank acknowledged the multiple benefits of female education both for the individual and society:

> 'It increases individual productivity, earnings, and quality of life. Studies show that each year of schooling increases individual earnings by a world wide average of 10%. It greatly reduces female vulnerability to ill health, studies show that each year of schooling lowers fertility by 10%; better educated women have healthier babies and experience lower infant mortality; and better educated girls (and boys) exhibit lower rate of HIV/AIDs infection. It is fundamental for the development of democratic societies.'

My study of the international literature had confirmed the value of education, particularly for women, but I had also discovered the difficulties in delivering it which I will discuss in the next section.

Impediments to Education and Development

The uses and results of female education in the developing countries depend upon a number of factors. These include the international market situation and macro policies, the different development stages of a society and the priorities of the regimes in power. In discussing these factors I will look first at policies, then at social factors and lastly at the quality of education itself.

Impact of Macro Policies on Education in Developing Countries

Neo-liberal policies advocate a reduced role for the state and an enhanced one for the market in the social sectors including education. They are directly linked by some critics to the disproportionate accumulation of wealth by the few and the deprivation of many which they state has taken place in recent times. For example:

> 'In a situation where there is already a staggering and seemingly irreversible gulf between those with wealth and those without …the last thing we should desire is a national and global education system that mirrors the same gulf - yet that is the direction that we are seemingly headed in…Neo-liberal economy ideologues … suggest abdicating most things (including key aspects of secondary and tertiary education policy) to the 'magic hand' of the market or to decentralization in the name of people. Such a policy framework, which is unfortunately prevalent in most of the developing world today, often with the explicit support of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and World Bank, will almost be a recipe for growing and irreversible global inequalities in educational opportunity and access' (Malhotra, 2000: 364).

Unfortunately the conditions attached to the World Bank's loans have often left no choice for the governments of developing countries who are in pressing need of financial support.

> "Developing countries seeking educational loans, even to maintain their system at the pre-debt crisis levels face a stark dilemma: implement the changes outlined by Bank personnel in exchange for approval of your loan application. Policy makers who accede can expect some or all of the following: resources diverted from primary education…parents balk at paying increased fees; further skewing in favour of the privileged few…more teacher flight…as a result of irregular salary payment…Banya (1991) describes a depressing example of what can happen in a particular situation" (Berman, 1997: 149).

The net effect of these policies is likely to be that the poor have increasing difficulty in getting access to high quality education for which they have to pay. As women are particularly likely to be poor, they and their families are the most likely to face this problem

Assumptions about Education Aid

Aid is necessary for sustainable educational development. Nevertheless the traditional assumptions about educational development aid have hindered the establishment of a coherent system which provides both the right to and the means of acquiring universal primary education. Kochhar and Gopal (1997:110) list and discuss some of these assumptions:

> 'Educational development projects 'belong' to the external agency or foreign aid entity and therefore there should be a hands off policy…Donor agencies and nations should be viewed with scepticism by recipient nations because they typically seek to bring about changes in values, orientations and cultures and to impose Western capitalist consumer culture…It is not essential that educational planning directly reflect the democratisation process; country elites can best represent the general population at educational planning conferences.'

Relationships based on such assumptions lead to mistrust. This is particularly likely to be the case in areas such as FATA where traditional assumptions about gender roles are very different from those currently held in the West. In such areas there may be resistance to girls' education that arise from a belief that it may corrupt or contaminate its female pupils.

Poverty

Poverty influences both the people and the state in poor countries. On one hand the poor in developing countries understandably tend to have less demand for schooling due to opportunity costs. Even if, as in Pakistan, state education is free, there may be costs in the form of books or uniform or through the loss of a child's labour. On the other hand states tend to allocate insufficient resources to provide high quality education for the primary age group (Colclough, Rose and Tembon, 2000: 25).

As argued above World Bank structural adjustment and privatisation have resulted in developing countries allocating decreased state resources to the social sectors, including female education.

> 'In countries like Zambia, limits on public spending and the introduction of fees for users of services, including education, have reduced the chances of children, particularly girls, enrolling in school and completing their primary education.' (Sweetman, 1998: 3)

Gender roles

Society in the developing countries is mainly male dominated.

> 'The whole world of education is dominated primarily by male educators…as a result it has …reflected male desires and male perceptions and aspirations, leaving little room for female hopes and aspirations. Highly educated planners and theorists have shaped education with an academic bias [which]…excludes the abilities of the poorer working class and women…Why should women

> learn the history of the world, the geography of their country and the distance between sun and the earth, if they were going to be mothers and wives in their future life? …In offices when a question of equality is raised males are found to be visibly shocked and become resistant to any change' (Jahan, 1997: 59-61)

Since most of the gender equality related projects are supported by donors, these are treated as a 'donors' agenda' for female education. Despite the emphasis from donors on investment in female education in their contractual arrangements with governments, progress in many countries is less than satisfactory.

> "There could of course be an enlightening and fruitful exploration of the implicit set of choices which many governments make, either deliberately or through neglect, and which equally influence goals. A case in point would be the relative neglect, by successive Pakistani governments, of female education in spite of the compelling evidence of the high rate of economic returns to such investments. It is probably true to say that there is always a hidden agenda in the set of investment choices governments make or fail to make" (Smith, 1997:20).

Because many cultures in developing countries give females a secondary position, mainly one of fulfilling their reproductive role in society, schooling is not considered a priority for them. "In *The Child Bride* [SCF/US and USAID study] parents expressed the view that school has no value (44 per cent), girls have house work (32 per cent) and girls will marry off (24 per cent)" (Jahan,1997:56).

As a result girls often feel inferior and subservient to males and become vulnerable and insecure.

> "As girls reach puberty and marriageable age, parents are reluctant to let them travel long distances to schools especially in insecure rural areas…Male fears that educated girls will be 'uncontrollable' and 'disobedient'…exist" (Leach, 1998: 14).

Consequently there is opposition to their education.

> "Hostility to women receiving education has resulted in well founded fears over physical safety, deterring women and girls in many communities from participating freely in educational activities" (Leach, 1998: 14).

Where education is introduced steps may be taken to ensure that it does not upset the status quo. El-Sanabary (1994) from her research on the Saudi education system and society shows that education can be designed as an instrument to reinforce gender divisions. However, despite restrictions education exposes females to new ideas from the west which creates tensions.

According to Colclough, Rose and Tembon (2000), the existence of adverse cultural practices at various levels of society, in the labour market, school and household, produces a set of powerful forces which impede the enrolment, persistence and performance of girls in school relative to boys. Research by Knodel (1997) shows that in societies such as Thailand where women have a favourable position relative to that in other regional developing countries, female autonomy is relatively high. This makes it possible that the gender gap can close in at least some developing countries.

Quality of education

In most developing countries the quality of education is low. Poor teaching and school environments, access issues and lack of management and supervisory skills in the education departments and ministries provide little incentive for parents to send their daughters to be educated. Lack of basic teaching materials and other facilities such as a water supply and separate toilets for girls have a further negative impact on girls' participation.

Education also has little relevance to the lives women will actually lead. Despite the fact that the female contribution to household economy is substantial, even in the

traditional set up, in the form of their domestic and agricultural labour and there is a substantial increase in female headed families, the existing education system and textbooks do not prepare females for these roles but are instead a source of stereotypes (see Leach, 1997). The non-availability of skilled and motivated teachers and of educated women as role models also affects the quality of education and discourages female participation.

These difficulties at a general level trickle down to family level, excluding women from the benefits of education. In this context NGOs may potentially be part of the solution due to their ability to interact with females at household levels. NGOs are often close to the ordinary people including women and exert social power or influence on their behalf.

The action research for this thesis was to be undertaken by the NGO Khwendo Kor. The review of the literature from developing countries therefore looked at the role and difficulties of NGOs in educational development.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

> 'Within the World Bank's policy guidelines NGOs (Non Government Organizations) are defined as 'entirely or largely independent of government, and characterised mainly by humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives'.' (Korten,1991:18, quoted by Rassool, 1999: 90)

The important role of NGOs in education for development programmes was acknowledged at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for All (1990). It is estimated that NGOs currently provide 10% of donor aid to the South (Rassool, 1999: 90-91) In the last few decades NGOs, representing civil society, have been instrumental in changing and re-orienting the policies of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, UN Agencies and national governments.

The types and messages of NGOs vary

> ‘from one of extreme radicalism aimed at ‘liberating’ the poor from the constraints that have made them poor to one aimed at increasing community awareness of what can be achieved individually and by common action’ (Bowden, 1997: 7).

In practice, almost all categories of NGOs support people-centred progress and advocate the cause of deprived segments in society such as the poor, the displaced, women and minorities. In general they advocate participatory approaches involving all stake holders, empowering communities by providing information, facilitating them in making their own decisions, enhancing capacities and skills, building bridges with mainstream organizations, and encouraging analytical and critical thinking. As will be seen this, at any rate, was the approach adopted in the action research described in this thesis.

These approaches are mainly in line with Freire’s (1972) theory of “libertarian education”. According to this theory literacy enables oppressed people to think about and understand their situation and to set in motion the debates needed to change it.

Suspicion of NGOs

Despite the recognised role of NGOs, there are apprehensions about them. NGOs in general question the status quo and advocate the cause of deprived segments of society. This poses a threat to the existing power structures and as a result NGOs are faced with strong resistance at all levels including state, institutions and society in general. This resistance combines with opposition to female education.

Since the work of NGOs is assumed to be strongly linked with changing the existing society to a modernised and westernised one, there are also misunderstandings about them. Suspicion of the West is exacerbated by other factors such as the commercial media, films and dramas where sex, violence, crime, materialism and emotional frustration are regularly displayed.

> ‘In judging such developments one must, however, never forget that in many Islamic countries the masses were rather sceptical when it came to an all-too-exaggerated modernization and are still reluctant to accept it wholeheartedly… The entire inherited value system seemed to have lost its importance and had been replaced with radically different values under the influence of the west (the influence of western movies and videos cannot be overrated in this process).’ (Schimmel, 1992: 139-140)

Western values portrayed in this way are not seen as acceptable by the mass of the people and hence NGOs, which are seen as western, are facing strong opposition in conservative countries, especially the Muslim ones.

Conclusion

The emphasis in international literature on education, especially female education, since world war two is due to its achievements in reducing the fertility rate, and promoting economic growth and better health. Education also has the capacity to promote female autonomy and mobility. Hence, female education has contributed to both personal development and the progress of society. Therefore it has rightly come to be seen as a basic human right.

Despite these general arguments in favour of education, it is not universally promoted in developing countries, and its effects vary from country to country. At an international level it is influenced by the macro economic policies exemplified by the World Bank and IMF and assumptions about donors’ aid. At national level it is affected by a state’s political priorities, poverty, culture, gender roles in society and levels of development. NGOs are increasingly playing a role in female education but though they have achieved success by applying strategies empowering deprived societies, they are often faced with hostility.

Against this background the action research described in this thesis is concerned with two particularly important problems: the enhancement of female education and

the way in which this could be achieved by an NGO operating in a situation where it was likely to face a high level of mistrust. As will be seen the attempt to do this raised a third problem which is implicit in some of the literature reviewed above. This is the fact that in these circumstances female education, on its own and unaccompanied by other changes, is unlikely to succeed in its own terms or even to benefit women in the long term.

Chapter Three
Research Strategy and Methods

Introduction

Chapter 1 has outlined the problem I wished to study: 'Is it possible for a women's NGO to introduce sustainable female education and development into FATA?' The broad thrust of the research strategy I wanted to adopt was clear. I would use my time as a student to understand how such a project could be undertaken and my position in an NGO to undertake it. By describing and analyzing the success and failure of these actions I hoped to show whether this endeavor was feasible. More generally I hoped to deduce the principles that should underpin this work and which might be applicable elsewhere. Within this general strategy I used several methods in an attempt to ensure greater rigor and authenticity.

As I have described, the thesis itself is presented historically through a narration of the processes undertaken by me as a researcher and as experienced by me as a tribal woman myself and as a part of Khwendo Kor (KK). This chapter outlines:

- The stages of the research
- The general approach
- Particular techniques used

Stages of the research

The research took place in four stages: the initial analysis and planning; further preparatory work 'on the ground' some of which was carried out as a consultant to the Asian Development Bank; initial work and selection of villages; and implementation. The different stages involved different kinds of research. The initial work relied on interviews, the use of official statistics and other 'non-participant' methods. Later stages combined action with the collection of data and relied on methods adapted to these ends.

General Approach

The project involves two main perspectives – those of action research and the case study.

The research questions clearly imply the need for action research. In such research the researcher tries out her ideas in a real situation. In this way she sees if they are "doable" and if so how. This in turn involves keeping

> 'an action-oriented perspective that actively seeks solutions to problems, trying out tentative ones, weighing the results and consequences of actions, all within an endless cycle of supposition-action-evidence-revision that characterizes good science and good management' (Trochim, 2006)

In the words of Coghlan and Brannick (2001: 11)

> 'Action research is appropriate when the research topic is an unfolding series of actions over time in a given group, community or organization, and the members wish to study their own actions in order to change or improve the working of some aspects of the system, and study the process to learn from it. Hence action research is akin to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and reflective practice (Schon, 1983)'

In most cases this involves a participatory approach.

> 'One of the most important influences in the development of PR (Participatory Research) has been the work of Paulo Freire. Freire linked the process of knowing with that of learning, through an ongoing cycle of reflection and action (praxis). This learning process stimulates the growth of critical thinking, which raises critical awareness in learners of the world about them. Alongside Freire's ideas came a parallel development, that of the phenomenologists who held experience as a legitimate source of knowledge.

> Thus, experience was added to reflection and action, as factors that could influence practice. Finally, the late 1970's brought the re-emergence of the debate about peoples' right to participate in their development.' (Martin, 1997)

As Coghlan and Brannick (2001:1) state, ' The outcomes are both an action and a research outcome, unlike traditional research approaches which aim at creating knowledge only.' In terms very similar to those used by Freire, they describe 'two action research cycles operating in parallel…'. One is diagnosing, planning action, taking action and evaluating action and the second is:

> 'a reflection cycle which is an action research cycle about the action research cycle. In other words, at the same time as you are engaging in the project action research cycles, you need to be diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating how the action research project itself is going and what you are learning…Hence it is learning about learning, in other words, meta learning.' (Coghlan and Brannick 2001:19)

The second key perspective of the research follows from the first. The action must take place in a particular context and a particular time. Inevitably there are many unique or idiosyncratic features. The description and analysis of the action is therefore a case study and has the features, advantages and limitations of this form of research. As Trochim says:

> 'A case study is an intensive study of a specific individual or specific context…There is no single way to conduct a case study, and a combination of methods (e.g., unstructured interviewing, direct observation) can be used.' (Trochim, 2006)

An advantage of this form of study is that the complex processes of real life are open to view. A potential drawback is that it may be hard to know how far these processes can be generalized to other situations. This drawback, however, although more apparent in this kind of research than elsewhere is not unique to it.

Generalization always depends on an implicit assumption that the new situation to which the findings are expected to apply is *in all essential respects* similar to the one in which the original research was undertaken. What matters is the rigor and plausibility with which these 'essential respects' are identified.

Style of Research

These characteristics determine the basic style of the approach. As will become apparent this has four main characteristics.

It is '*ethnographic*' in which I immersed myself in the culture from which indeed I came and then to stand back from it and understand what I had observed.

It is '*participatory and empowering*'. The study is undertaken in collaboration with all key stakeholders especially the NGO (in this case Khwendo Kor) and the communities, men and women in the selected villages.

It is *'reflective'*. The study is about certain things which were planned and brought about for the purpose of introducing a female education and development project in FATA to change and improve the life of women and children. These actions are evaluated for learning and improvement.

It is '*multi-method'*. The research involved a combination of many methods applied at various levels for different purposes. Like case studies, ethnography is considered to be a combination or blending of different techniques and of various methods (Denzin, 1970).

The overall cycle of action and reflection has involved a variety of intellectual processes. These have included identifying the most relevant to the questions, developing a plan for completing the research, structuring the write up, accessing, organizing, dropping and selecting data, and assessing the strengths and difficulties of the different approaches applied.

A particular advantage of the multi-method approach is that the different kinds of evidence can be put together or 'triangulated'. So, for example, evidence from interviews on the importance of local power structures can be put together with the experience of trying to introduce the project and the key role which these structures played in determining what happened.

Specific Methods

As described above the study necessarily involved a variety of methods. The methods used were adapted to the situation on the spot. For example, it was sometimes necessary to adopt a less formal approach to an interview or focus group than had been intended simply because the situation seemed to demand this.

The following outlines the methods used.

The analysis of secondary data

Much data is generated by international agencies such as the World Bank, UN and governments for various purposes. For example, that on poverty and demography is used for preparing budgets. This data is available and could be utilized in research for providing background information. The main purpose for secondary data analysis was to see what knowledge already existed related to the research questions and to provide background information on FATA. For this purpose I used the internet, newspapers, reports by donor agencies and the Pakistani government and a small number of books by historians or anthropologists.

Literature Review

I used the library resources to examine how the difficulties faced by women's NGOs have been addressed elsewhere and which tools have been used and found useful in achieving the participation of rural and tribal women. I looked in

particular for information on Participatory Action Research, Rural Community Development, Gender, Women's Development, Female Education and Development in the developing countries.

The use of reports and minutes

The later stages of the research made use of reports and minutes. These included, for example, KK's official quarterly progress reports sent to donors.

Ethnography and Participant Observation

I would usually introduce myself as a researcher and an NGO worker who wanted to explore the difficulties and opportunities for introducing female education in FATA and to find practical ways of doing this. In this way I would apply a tradition of research in which I would become part of the group of respondents, and from within their context could get information unobtrusively. (See Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

In practice as a researcher my multiple identities helped greatly in using this method.

> 'Participant observation often requires months or years of intensive work because the researcher needs to become accepted as a natural part of the culture in order to assure that the observations are of the natural phenomenon.' (Trochim, 2006)

In contrast to the above I was part of KK and a tribal myself with fluency in the local language dialects. This not only saved time but helped me to be an effective participant observant without unintentionally disrupting the dynamics of the

situation. It also helped me in conducting the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in the villages. Thus the discussion in one focus group was carried on in the women's own language and included the following points:

> 'Though she has come from Peshawar and is wearing a bright white *chader* (head-cloth) we can't wear white *chaders* as there is so much dust and mud here. Her dress colors are also different and clean because she is educated, but see, she knows the names of our men, speaks our language, her village is two steps to ours, so and so from our village is married to so and so in her village, and she is a woman like us, understands what we are saying and it is not dangerous to tell her things.'

As a result they gave very important information about certain *maliks* (head men or tribal chiefs) in their village saying that two *maliks* were extremely greedy. They said that though these *maliks* were imposing and out to impress you with a great feast in return they would want to have everything that you might bring to this village for themselves. Some relatively 'good' *maliks* were also identified by these women. Interestingly one teenage girl sitting in the group was pointed out as a close relation to one of the greedy *maliks*. The girl kept on smiling at the negative remarks about her uncle, as if she was saying 'nothing to do with me!'

By contrast my other identity, as an NGO worker, helped in interaction within KK and other NGOs and donors.

Direct observation

> 'The researcher is observing certain sampled situations or people rather than trying to become immersed in the entire context.' (Trochim, 2006)

By using this approach I could refuse to participate in meetings and training sessions. On one occasion for example I asked a meeting of senior members of KK

to discuss whether KK should intervene in FATA. I then left the meeting room so that the team was not influenced by my physical presence. In this case the factors leading to the decision taken by the team as a result of discussion over the question were written down.

This was very helpful in analyzing a women's NGO's perspective on entering and initiating work in FATA. In principle they agreed to intervene in FATA on a number of grounds. They specified the grounds and wrote them down on a flip chart that was very useful in telling this part of the story.

A rather different example of 'holding one's tongue' occurred in a meeting with officials from FATA government departments of Agriculture and Live Stock Development.

I attended this meeting in my role as a consultant on gender issues to the Asian Development Bank. I detached myself from the discussions in the first half of the meeting to do direct observation. This was done from a gender perspective to see the value given to women's issues in their sector specific official routine discussions. I found that in the first hour and a half of discussions there was no mention of women's needs or role in the department's strategies. On my pointing this out, a very positive and enthusiastic discussion was triggered off, as if people were waiting for this opportunity. This in turn led me to a rather different interpretation of what was going on to that suggested by the initial observation.

In contrast to the above, the combination of roles could sometimes cause problems leading to a clear distinction between me as a researcher and others, and so to an unnatural situation. For example, my decision to take notes during an informal and relaxed discussion with a gender-biased official instantly changed the environment to a formal one. For this reason I was typically more active in dealings with village women who might otherwise have found my role strange. Even with village women's groups, direct observation was tried at times when I felt that they were intensely involved in a discussion, often about some sort of a decision.

Semi Structured Interviews

Interviewing is an effective method, which can allow people to express how they feel, think and what could be their aspirations, expectations, approaches and attitudes towards certain things in their life. Semi-structured interviews are based on an interview guide. The aim is to understand as much as possible of how a respondent thinks about the topics to be discussed and the interviewer tries to keep the interview informal. He or she tries to follow the line of the respondent's thought, tackling the topics in the order in which they naturally come up but trying to ensure that all the key points are covered.

At the beginning of the study unstructured and semi-structured interviews were held with many people. Both males and females from various backgrounds in and related to FATA were interviewed. These included: illiterate and poor tribal village women, a female Member of the National Assembly (MNA), male and female Members of the Provincial Assembly, female government officers from FATA and NWFP, village men in FATA, the Political Agent and Asst Political Agent, school age girls, religious political leaders, *maliks*, donors and those directly affected by the war on terror.

The main purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to obtain a first-hand picture from people with a direct stake in FATA. They enabled a relaxed atmosphere which allowed the interviewees to express their problems. For example, I asked a female agency education officer in Bajaur agency if the government girls' primary education infrastructure could be used for women's adult education. She said that the conditions and quality of FATA government schools was one of the main reasons why even the girls do not attend these schools. When asked how the quality could be improved, she replied,

> ’What can I do to improve the quality of education if we don’t get educational material on time? You know the men officers are lazy also *(smiling)*. It takes time to get budget approval from the finance department. [More time is] spent over the contractors’ bidding, [and then] getting money from the finance section, storing and supplying it.’

She said she would not like her name to be mentioned as she was already known as a ‘demanding’ officer.

The interviews could also require interpretation. For example, a village woman (mother of two school age girls) was asked if she would like her girls to be educated. She said,

> ‘Listen we may look like animals to you but we do have eyes and brains *(sar stargay laree)* and we put our food like you to our mouths not ears and are not enemies to our own selves. There is no school, no teachers, we are poor so our girls can’t go to it. *Sarkoor* (the government) hates us and favors *maliks.* Everything is given to them.’

There was a mixture of deprivation, insult, anger and an urge for help in her tone. These few sentences gave a lot of messages, some of which depend on interpretation and others not. These messages were that: village women are human like any one else in this world; that poverty doesn’t take their rights away; that they are very poor because the government’s administration works through the *maliki* system which is not concerned with the welfare of ordinary people; that tribal people may appear wild with their feuds and enmities but they are caught up in a vicious circle of poverty and deprivation and if opportunities are made available, her daughters will go to school as not doing so is like being one’s own enemy.

The combination of roles taken by me as a researcher changed the nature of some of these interviews.

A *malik* with substantial influence said,

> ‘If your work is not *gad wad* (contaminated) we will support you in our village and I am a member of many *jirgas* (traditional tribal decision-making bodies) so I can muster support in other places as well but be warned I don’t want to see any *gad wad*….Why do you want our women to be educated? Nowadays even real brothers born from one mother’s belly don’t have time for one another, so how come that you are that much concerned about us?’

I replied: ‘It is part of our job like your job of going to *jirgas* and anyhow it is up to you to decide. We are just exploring if you were interested.’ This response produced a more informative reply from the *malik* .

> ‘Of course we are interested and by *gad wad* I mean that as a result of education women shouldn’t forget Allah and the way of His religion, shouldn’t lose their humanity and shouldn’t start becoming *moutabar-e-shee* (too proud) and not listening to what they are told but doing what they want to do. And by *gad wad* I mean that you should not deceive us but do what you say. Your team should consist of really respectable serious people, not irresponsible youngsters, lightly dressed, giggling and wandering here and there.’

I said, ‘Everything will progress with village people’s agreement and participation.’

As can be seen this interview involved more than passive research. I made clear my own position and agenda as part of an NGO. As a result the *malik* clarified some of the fears that the people in general and especially those with some authority have about female education. These fears had to be effectively addressed if the proposed project was to succeed.

Telling life stories

The tribal village women often chose to respond to questions about their difficulties by presenting a summary of their whole life experiences. This approach builds on a tradition of telling life stories. The older generation tells the younger one about the bravery of men killed in fights and the stories of heroic men and women, particularly those related to honour. So a story may tell how a man or woman saved the family honour by vengeance or how a beautiful woman spent all her young life as a widow but honorably. Implicitly the stories reveal the values and aspirations of those who tell them.

I did not plan to use this method. My decision to do so followed a focus group meeting of tribal women to explore the difficulties they faced and the possibilities for development. During the discussion one woman told me that she would like to say something in private. Most of the other women in the group nodded their heads in support. We went to a corner where the woman told her story as follows:

> 'Twenty-five years ago my husband killed a man and ran away from the village leaving me back here with his daughter. He bought another woman in Bara in the Khyber agency, the place of his refuge and never bothered about me. I raised my daughter as a single mother through alms, doing household work for food from better off families in the village and the *zakat*
> (the portion of income that Islam prescribes for charity) that people would give me. After my husband left me I shifted to my brother's house as I was very young and couldn't live on my own. My brother was also very, very poor and has seven children. His wife didn't have sufficient milk so he had to borrow money, mainly for milk for his children during their early infancy. The loan accumulated to Rs 150.000 which he couldn't pay back. About two years back he shot himself dead in front of our uncles. He couldn't stand the pressure. Now I am also looking after his widow and seven children.'

On rejoining the group, I realized that most of these women already knew all she told me but she chose to talk in private because some in the group were relatives of

her husband and she did not want to say something which would create dissension. The story was revealing in itself but also helpful for me as I was able to behave more tactfully.

However, two other women told their heartbreaking stories within the group. One 20-year-old married woman said:

> 'This *(where the group meeting was held)* is my parents' house and I am married with a two-year-old daughter to a man who works in Baluchistan. He comes on leave after 12 to 18 months for a period of one or two months. When he comes on leave then I move to his parents' home in our village. I do this because my father-in-law is very cruel. He beats his daughters-in-law and he has already killed one daughter-in-law by pushing her into a well in their house. So I am scared to live there without my husband. According to our customs, my husband gives all his salary to his father and gives me very little for our daughter. He is a very obedient son of his father and wouldn't listen to any word against him. Thanks to Allah that my parents are not poor But here all the time I face negative remarks about not being settled with my in-laws. I wish I was not totally dependent on my parents, had a home of my own and could do something.'

The above experiences illustrate a variety of rather different points: the social pressures in a tribal society with closely interwoven blood relations; the poverty of the women and their lack of opportunities; the role that might be played by bringing together women to share their experiences; and the need for outsiders such as such as NGO staff to behave with great care in situations where they could easily be seen as taking sides.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are normally used to generate information. In the context of action research they had additional objectives. They built trust by allowing transparency

over the positions of those involved, allowed information to be shared, and allowed more people to build consensus in collective decision-making and commit themselves to sharing certain responsibilities.

They were very useful during the traditional tribal gatherings of *maliks* and people during the initial exploratory work. The discussions would focus on analyzing the pros and cons of a women's NGO entering their village.

This was done in traditional tribal ways. For example, sitting on the ground in a circle in an egalitarian manner which is closer to traditional *jirga* proceedings:

> 'According to the modern understanding, *jirga* may be noted as an informal institution as there is little documentation involved, and its processes are flexible, delicate and little understood by the outside world. At the same it is noted that *jirga* has enormous impact on the lives of Pushtuns, particularly those living in the tribal areas, mountains or inaccessible areas where government's influence is low The *jirga* represents the essence of democracy in operation in which every individual has a direct say in shaping the course of things around him. Practiced this way, democracy operates as spiritual and moral force instead of becoming an automation of votes…One can see that *jirga* is not only a dispute resolution body, but it has many faces depending on the purpose and nature of these. There is, however, little distinction in name between these *jirgas*. To Pushtuns, the context in which a specific *jirga* operates gives a clear and undoubted understanding of the role and responsibilities of that particular *jirga.*' (Yousafzai and Gohar, 2005: 15 -18)

In a *jirga* the elders lead discussions towards a unanimous decision and others are allowed to raise points of difference or agreement. I would take a low profile in such discussions to get to know the real motives of the *maliks*.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

A key method used in the project was that of PRA (participatory rural appraisal). Like focus groups, this was intended both to gather information and to promote development. It was used in the research to select villages for the action research, a process described in detail later. The information gathered for this selection was also used as data in its own right.

PRA itself is better seen as an overall approach or philosophy than a specific technique. It has many tools whose selection and use depends upon the situation and judgment of the people involved.

> 'At its best PRA is a process, transferring skills from facilitator to community. An objective is to equip the community with the confidence and motivation so they themselves can initiate a process of empowerment.' (Hinton and Young, no date)

According to Chambers (2002:3)

> '*Good PRA is a process, not a one off event*. It involves much more than just appraisal…In Pakistan PRA now stands for Participation-Reflection-Action'.

The aim of this process is empowerment based on active participation.

> 'The village people, especially women and girls, have to be confident enough in the end to take ownership of the project and lead in all phases of development processes in their village. These include problem identification, prioritization, planning, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It avoids creating dependency on external agencies and development practitioners from NGOs. …It is linked with distinctive behaviors, attitudes and approaches. …We are not teachers or transferors of technology, but instead conveners, catalysts, and facilitators. We have to unlearn and put our knowledge, ideas and categories in second place. Our role

is to enable others to do their own appraisal, analysis, presentations, planning and actions.'

In all kinds of participatory research keeping objectivity is very difficult. A researcher could lose the main perspective of the research and develop an emotional attachment to the respondents with whom she shares personal experiences and problems, or could put herself into dangerous situations. On the other hand, developing personal rapport with the research participants can provide deep insight into their private life and so a better understanding of reality.

Challenges

This has not been an easy research project. FATA is remote. It is difficult and dangerous to travel in. The situation does not stay still. When planning for the study began, the attack on the Twin Towers had not yet happened. This event and later ones changed the situation and made it yet more difficult for an NGO that was suspected of being 'western' to carry out 'research'.

Faced with these difficulties I had to get my information by diverse methods and from different sources as opportunity offered. I was an actor in this situation as well as an observer. I had to take account of what I observed but also of the results of what I or my NGO tried to do. So I had to pull together the results of different methods. In doing so, I had to make use of a wide variety of ideas concerned with Feminism, Gender, Participation, Human Rights and Development.

I hope that I have been able to achieve the benefits of participatory research but I cannot pretend that I have avoided either emotional involvement or danger. I have, however, been conscious of these threats to objectivity and have tried to write up my thesis in as objective a way as possible.

Conclusion

The research took the form of a case study of an action research project. There were four stages: the initial analysis, preparatory work, initial work in and selection of villages, and implementation. In style it is ethnographic, reflective, participatory and multi-method.

The methods were adapted to fit the situation. They included:

- Participant Observation
- Participation in a study supported by the Asian Development Bank
- Non-participant observation
- Semi Structured Interviews
- 'Telling life stories'
- Focus Group Discussions

A particularly important role was played by PRA, more properly seen as a process or a philosophy than a specific technique.

A key issue was the combination of roles I played as I was not only a researcher but also a tribal woman and a worker in the NGO that undertook the project. This made the study a difficult one. So too did the nature of the area, the developing political situation, the combination of action and observation, and the many methods and ideas used in the project.

Overall I have aimed to give a coherent account of what works in introducing women's development in an area such as FATA. This means it must fit with the needs and problems identified at the beginning of the project, with my observations, interviews and feelings, and with how the action part of the project developed and what it did or did not achieve.

Chapter 4:
Understanding the Context

Introduction

This chapter places the project in the broader context of FATA. It covers the geopolitical position of FATA, its history and administrative structure, government policies towards it, its culture, and it current political situation. As will be seen, this background helps to explain the project, the difficulties of doing it and the way it was carried out. The chapter does not cover a key part of this background: the role and status of women but this is the focus of chapters 5 and 6.

The chapter itself is based on literature drawn from sources which include the internet, the data collected from FATA government departments, donors such the ADB or the World Bank (WB), UN sources, books, and newspaper articles.

Geography

The Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan lies between the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan and the border of Afghanistan. Its total area is 27,220 square kilometers and its population according to the 1998 census is 3.1 million, a density of about 114 persons per square kilometer.

Map of FATA in relation to Pakistan

Administratively the area is divided between seven tribal agencies (TAs). From north to south, these comprise: 1) Bajaur, 2) Mohmand, 3) Khyber, 4) Kurram, 5) Orakzai, 6) North Waziristan and 7) South Waziristan. The tribal belt also includes the six Frontier regions (FRs) that comprise of the small buffer regions between the TAs and the adjoining districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki, Tank and the D.I.Khan in NWFP.

Ethnically the inhabitants are Pathan, a people who live in Afghanistan as well as FATA**.** Caroe (cited by Afridi (2003:4))describes their territory:

> ‘It is best seen as a long narrow fortification running parallel in two belts along the line of the Indus. The first belt is made up of plains and valleys and the second standing over the valley is the great transept of the Suleimen mountain coming southwards from the mighty range of the Hindukush.
>
> This second belt of territory [FATA] is holding the tribal area of the Hill tribes and is lying between the administrative border and the Durand line [border of Afghanistan]. This highland is carrying in some places peaks, ranging from 10,000 to 16,000 feet. Almost everywhere in this territory, the foothills are bleak. But further up there are valleys in between mountains, which are of great beauty. It is almost 200 miles in length. The variation of climate and season are extreme. In winter and spring the lower valleys are

delightful, the sun shines, the breeze blows, clean from the snows. It is enjoyable to live. In summer maize and rice are grown in the valleys but the heat is unbearable. Yet such is the contrast in climate that at the peak of the hot weather a few hour of journey will take you to the forest and alpine trees, where you can find again the cold weather of the spring.'

A tribal Pushtun from Khyber Agency

Although it is beautiful the area is not very fertile or rich in natural resources. (Despite some mineral resources these have not been developed) Economically the area is not attractive to a conqueror. Strategically, however, it may be important to dominate it. Six main routes running east-west pass through the tribal territory. Historically these routes have been important corridors of invasion and commerce

between the Indus plains and Central Asia. The poverty and geo-political position of FATA are crucial in understanding its history and its current political situation.

A Landscape in Waziristan.

History to Independence

There are few written records of the Pathans. Herodotus mentions them. From then on written evidence is short. Various conquerors have passed through the tribal areas. The Turks, the Mughals, the Iranians, the Sikhs and the British have attempted to subdue them but none have fully succeeded. Men from the tribal areas may have played an important part in their armies but they did not pay their taxes.

The British divided the Pathans. In 1893 they signed the treaty that divided the current FATA region from Afghanistan along the so called Durand line. The Pathans live on both sides of this line and people on either side exercise the right to pass over it. The British also annexed the Peshawar valley. This left an area, FATA, between British India and Afghanistan.

The existence of this 'buffer zone' solved certain problems. It was a response to a perceived Russian threat. By dividing and thus weakening the Pathans it reduced the threat from them as well. At the same time it created problems. The British found it very difficult to control the zone they had failed to subdue. They attempted to do this through a mixture of bribes, incentives and force. The key elements of this were put in place in the 19th and early 20th centuries and are still there today. As described by Bangash (1997 b) it depends on:

- The institution of a 'political agent' in each tribal area – an official who is 'part governor, part ambassador' and ultimately charged with keeping adequate order by means of diplomacy, patronage, and force
- The recruitment of paramilitary forces within the tribal area to support the 'political agent', conciliate the tribesmen by providing work and provide some defense for the land itself
- The institution of a system of '*maliks*', hereditary 'head men' at various levels (tribe, khail, sub-khail) within the tribes who are registered by the political agent and paid a stipend in return for keeping the roads open, organizing justice, recruiting levies and generally representing tribal interests to the British and vice-versa.
- The maintenance of the traditional system of *jirga*s for the management of local disputes
- The use of other forms of patronage, for example, licenses to export certain goods or use vehicles. Such licenses can now be bought and sold and are very valuable to those who have them.
- The use of punitive raids by forces based outside the area

The system of law that operated in India did not apply. Instead the British used the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), a code primarily concerned with avoiding unrest and making use of group punishment.

History Following Independence

Following the independence of Pakistan the tribal areas were recognized as part of Pakistan but constitutionally separate from it. The present constitutional status is enshrined in Articles 246 and 247 of the 1973 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The system of *maliks* and political agents was maintained. So too were the Frontier Crime Regulations. In the past an electoral college of *maliks* elected a handful of members to the senate and national assembly. Since 1997 FATA has sent 12 members to the national assembly under a system of adult suffrage. (See www.fata.gov.pk)

Despite this development FATA is still seen as suffering from a lack of democracy. The day to day business of government is the responsibility of the political agents who are responsible to the governor in Peshawar who in turn is responsible to the president. The governor also controls branches of the civil service responsible for education, agriculture and so on in FATA. The political agents co-ordinate and facilitate the work of these departments within their areas.

These executive functions are not subject to democratic or court control. People from the tribal areas have no representation in the assembly of the North West Frontier Province, whose governor orders their affairs. The Pakistan Supreme Court has no power in the tribal areas, where justice is in the hands of local elders or the political agent. Federal laws can only be extended to FATA through presidential decree. The democratically elected National Assembly cannot pass laws that apply to FATA and does not control the civil service or the political agents. It does pass the Pakistan budget that funds these activities through a Federal Government Ministry known as SAFRON. Even here, however, it has little practical influence.

These administrative and political arrangements are essentially inherited from British times. Recently they have been criticized on a number of grounds (see e.g. Bangash, 1997, a, b, c):

- Lack of recognition of democratic and human rights, exemplified in the power of the unelected political agents, the group punishments of the Frontier Crime Regulations and the role of the political agent as both judge and jury
- The lack of democratic control over the legislation that applies in FATA
- Poor, corrupt or slow administration stemming from a lack of democratic accountability, and legal redress and the reliance on the personal qualities of particular political agents
- A tendency to subordinate the tasks of development and administration to the need to maintain order, the primary role of the political agent
- A related tendency to locate schools, allocate permits and grant other benefits with the aim of creating a dependent class of *maliks* dedicated to promoting the government's cause
- Criticisms of the *maliki* system itself as undemocratic and often corrupt

Responses to these criticisms tend to point to the poor state of development of FATA. Others, however, disagree:

> 'FATA is tenuously governed because of deliberate policy, not Pashtun tribal traditions or resistance. Since 1947, Pakistan has ruled it by retaining colonial-era administrative and judicial systems unsuited to modern governance. Repressive structures and denial of political representation have generated resentment. To deflect external pressure to curb radicalism, the Musharraf government talks about reforms in FATA but does not follow through. Instead, appeasement has allowed local militants to establish parallel, Taliban-style policing and court systems in the Waziristans, while

> Talibanisation also spreads into other FATA agencies and even the NWFP's settled districts'. (International Crisis Group, 2006)

All these quotes refer to the Taliban. To understand them, it is necessary say more about the culture and religion of the area and about recent history.

The Culture of FATA

The people of the tribal areas are 'indigenous'. As defined by article 1 of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989),

> 'Tribal peoples in independent countries [are those] whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;… Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the grounds to which the provisions of this Convention apply.'

Perhaps the most detailed and recent description of the culture of the indigenous people in FATA has been provided by Bangash (1996b), an academic who came from FATA himself. Four elements are crucial to his analysis: the family, geographical association, class and the influence on these of the former colonial system. As will be seen I am critical of certain aspects of Bangash's analysis and in particular of the fact that he pays almost no attention to the roles of women and Islam. In some respects too, his analysis, published between 1994 and 2000, has become out of date. As I see it, however, much of his thesis is still true and I follow it below.

The family is the central 'building block' of FATA society. It is the basic unit of the tribe. In a system known as '*Nikat*', families define themselves in terms of clans (*Khel*s and *sub-Khels*) which descend from a common male ancestor and

which are themselves but elements of the tribe descended from an even more remote male ancestor. The family structures the roles of the society members. Family lands and the work done by women upon them provide the basis for the economy. The family is the basis for feuds, alliances and the settlement of disputes, in all of which the marriage of family members may play a crucial role. It plays a central role in the honour system. It is a source of security for its members and without it they are dangerously alone. But it also restricts them.

Geography interacts with family in structuring FATA society. Sometimes people from different tribes live in the same village or closely connected villages. According to Bangash (1996b) these different groups may sometimes come to be seen as forming part of the same tribe. Even where this does not happen, the different groups have mutual concerns with irrigation, and common property and need some form of organization to deal with them. The usual way of dealing with this is that the different *khels* come together in order to conduct their village business. There is thus a system of 'plural leadership' rather than any one clear village head.

Bangash's third key principle of tribal organization is that of class. He defines (Bangash, 1996b: 23-28) four main classes:

- The aristocrats – 'traditional nobility, *Nawabs*, big families represented by 'star' *maliks*, influential *Pirs* [saints or holy men] with large numbers of followers, reasonably big landowners'
- The nouveau riche – 'big merchants, wholesalers, government contractors, timber merchants, transporters, arms traffickers, drugs and narcotics dealers'
- The educated and intellectual class – 'doctors, engineers, school, college and university teachers, professionals, active and retired members of civil and military bureaucracy'
- The common masses

As Bangash sees it, the common people have nothing to gain from the government, suffer from its 'indirect taxes' levied through the system of permits and '*rahderies*' needed for consumer goods, and have as little to do with it as possible. The intellectual and educated class is very small and most of its members choose to live outside FATA. The main beneficiaries of the FATA system are the aristocrats and – most particularly – the nouveau riche who benefit from the lack of direct taxes and who invest their profits outside the area.

As already discussed the government tries to use the *maliki* system to attach the aristocrats and the nouveau riche to itself. It also relies on the traditional *jirgas* as a means of administering justice and settling disputes.

Bangash (2000) describes these *jirgas* which are key means for dispensing justice and for resolving disputes at both family and communal level. There are different kinds of *Jirga.* They differ in the size of their membership, and the sanctions they are likely to apply and they have different relationships to the political authority. All *jirgas*, however, are expected to provide fair representation to the different parties and to bring to bear both the common *Pahktunwali* code (the traditional code of conduct of the Pashtun) and the local knowledge of elders and other influential people.

Bangash (2000) has a rather mixed view of the *jirgas*. On the one hand he appreciates the pride that local people take in them, their speed and low cost, their skill in identifying the facts, their informal nature and their acquaintance with local traditions and issues. On the other hand he points out that their acceptance depends on the existence of a tribal leadership that is both accepted and involved in the *jirga*s. Implicitly he also points to the role of *jirga* in reinforcing customs and traditions that may not benefit women.

> 'The council of elders … always strives to bring about a settlement of the dispute so as to end the blood feud. The *Jirga* may ask the accused to compensate the aggrieved party in case of material loss or by giving a girl in marriage in case of human loss.' (Bangash, 2000:14)

Role of Islam

Islam is deeply rooted in the lives of ordinary people: it permeates all aspects of life. The requirement to pray five times a day is strictly followed by men, children of more than 10 years of age and women in FATA. There are numerous mosques. Every village no matter how poor has one if not more. These are busy places. Men and boys, old and young, poor and rich, and politicians, professionals and ordinary villagers all go to the mosques in their vicinity. Any matter, however significant or insignificant, is liable to be seen within the framework of religion.

The interpretation of the Quran is, however, a particular one. FATA is an isolated and fundamentally tribal society. Customs and traditions are strong and the interpretation and application of religion has been based upon outdated customary tribal practices rather than on the Quranic teachings. To give a striking example, honor killings play an important role in society. They have, however, nothing to do with Islam (Schimmel, 1992). A wide variety of practices are, however, seen as un-Islamic or *haram* (forbidden). In these ways the tribal customary interpretation of Islam reinforces the patriarchal power structures of the imams, the *maliks* and other influential men leading to the gross marginalization of women discussed in the next chapters.

Islam in FATA is highly politicized and though all other political parties are banned in FATA the radical political parties are extremely powerful and active. Their influence is widespread everywhere in FATA and they are closely linked to the Taliban. Usher (2007) describes the situation:

> 'The shift in power relations was consecrated by one of the few political reforms Pakistan introduced into FATA. In 1996, the franchise was widened to include the whole adult population rather than just the *maliks*. Since political parties were not allowed to stand in the tribal areas, it was the mullahs who picked up much of the new vote. The chief beneficiary was Pakistan's largest Islamist movement, the Jamaat Ulama-e Islam, led by Maulana Fazl ul Rahman. The Jamaat Ulama-e Islam is a pro-Taliban party. It is also the dominant power in a coalition of Islamist parties (the Muttahida Majlis-e Amal) that has served as one of the pillars of Musharraf's military regime, acquiescing in the general's bid to extend his presidency for five years, sharing governance with his Muslim League party in Baluchistan province and ruling alone in the NWFP.'

Recent History

> 'For the last 30 years, FATA's isolation has served another purpose: The state has used the region as the launching pad for Pakistan-inspired insurgencies in

> Afghanistan, with the first coming after the communist coup in Kabul in 1978. Fuelled by CIA and Saudi money, but engineered by Pakistan's premier Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) directorate, the militias incubated in the tribal areas became national, regional and ultimately global Islamist movements, of which al-Qaeda is only the most notorious. Amidst penury grew a war economy driven by opium, guns and God, while *jihad* was first taught, then waged, by generations of young men, dislocated and orphaned in Afghan refugee camps, but schooled in *madrassas* [religious schools] allied to one or another of Pakistan's Islamist parties or sponsored by states like Saudi Arabia'. (Usher, cited in Nimmo, 2007)

In 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The history of FATA since that date has had little impact on the formal administration. It has, however, had a major impact in other ways and is very relevant to the way the project developed. The definitive and unbiased history of this period has not yet been written. The broad outlines, however, are clear and outlined below.

Between 1979 and 1989 the Soviets were involved in their conflict in Afghanistan. Over this period the Americans armed the *mujahideen* whose main route of supply ran through the tribal areas. Arms from training centers in FATA and from the various fronts were freely available in the local Bazaars. Local craftsmen copied Russian and American weapons from Kalashnikovs to the Stinger missile. Over this time the tribal areas became hosts to very large numbers of Afghan refugees. Traditionally the mountainous country and lack of police and judicial control have attracted criminals from other parts of Pakistan. There was now a growth in lawlessness and in particular in the production of drugs. (Shahin, 2001, International Crisis Group, 2006, Usher, 2007)

The departure of the Soviets was followed by a bloody struggle for the control of Afghanistan, in due course by the installation of the Taliban regime in 1996, the continued struggles between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, and the U.S. invasion in 2001. These developments did nothing to lessen the number of refugees

or the lawlessness and prevalence of weapons in FATA. They did, however, lead to the spread of strict and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Dedicated *jihadists* were trained in the area, a situation which the government acknowledged but seemed powerless to control (Shahin, 2001).

Politically these changes led to increased attempts by the Musharraff government to exert control over FATA. Intelligence agencies operate throughout it. Between 2004 and 2006 there was armed conflict between Pakistan troops, backed by American air strikes, and local people in South and North Waziristan.

These interventions further alienated the local population. Usher (2007) quotes *Malik* Qadir Khan, a tribal leader in North Waziristan as explaining,

> 'Everyone supported the Taliban when the army came in. It was a people's revolt. ….With every incursion, civilian death, and displacement, the Pakistan Taliban grew stronger. They defended villages, ambushed army patrols, killed pro-government elders, and imposed their own brand of 'Islamic' law and order.'

In 2006 this conflict was ended, or at least temporarily reduced, by an agreement between the government and local Taliban leaders. The former ceased their armed intervention with the understanding that the latter would seek out and remove foreigners. The agreement with the Taliban is widely seen as a military and political defeat for the government of Pakistan.

Recently there have been signs that this agreement has been breaking down. The US Vice-President, Dick Cheyney, is believed to have shown his disapproval of the agreement with the Taliban in March 2007. In doing so he was asking for a return for the money the US has 'invested'. According to the Nation, Pakistan has received $10 billion in direct US aid and as much again in covert aid, "most of it military," since September 11th 2001. So there are now (July, 2007) reports of the government

committing more resources to the control of FATA, there has been the incident of the Red Mosque, and the retaliation in Waziristan.

In the meanwhile the Taliban have profited from the pause in the fighting and the widespread feeling that the Pakistan Government is a tool of the Americans. They have force on the ground and they fill a need caused by the growing lawlessness, offering instead their own courts and even prisons.

At present the political situation is unclear. A local NGO worker emailed me about it in April 2007:

> 'We are living in a country where no one knows by whom we are being ruled, whether Taliban, religious extremists, Musharaf or Americans, indeed mind boggling. Police and law enforcement agencies seem feeble and are restricted to the police stations. Killing of innocent citizens is on the increase while the responsible authorities' slackness even more endangered the lives of the citizens.'

In July 2007 I think this analysis is still true.

Conclusion

FATA is amongst the poorest areas of Pakistan – indeed it is almost certainly the poorest. Poverty is endemic, government policies and systems are not people friendly and mostly dysfunctional. The condition of the ordinary tribal people is in many ways wretched and the need for development is great.

The task of bringing this development is not, however, an easy one. FATA is isolated, in many ways inaccessible and not a secure place in which to work. It is currently a focus for the war on terror and for a struggle between the Taliban, the Pakistan army and the security agencies. Without the agreement of these competing groups it is likely to be impossible for an NGO to work in FATA.

Chapter 5
The Role and Status of Women in FATA

Introduction

So far I have described the general history and condition of FATA. In this chapter I consider the central subject of the thesis; the tribal women themselves.

All commentators agree that women in FATA have a very difficult life. This is true of women in South Asia as a whole. According to Bhasin (1993: 3):

> "The subordination that we experience at a daily level, regardless of the class we might belong to, takes various forms - discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence within family, at the place of work, in society. The details may be different but the theme is the same"

In Pakistan the old patriarchal culture and society put females in a position that where they are in danger of losing their identity, confidence and self-esteem. They are submissive, shy and fearful. Their mental health suffers. According to the Asian Development Bank (2000:1),

> '[In Pakistan] it is estimated that two third of the psychiatric patients at any hospital or clinic are women.'

The same report (2000:1) says:

> 'Patriarchal values embedded in local traditions and culture predetermine the social value of gender…and the internalization of patriarchy by women themselves, becomes, the basis for gender discrimination and disparities in all spheres of life.'

An Amnesty International report (1999) comes to a similar conclusion.

> ‘The lives of millions of women in Pakistan are circumscribed by traditions which enforce extreme seclusion and submission to men. Male relatives virtually own them and punish contraventions of their proprietary control with violence. For the most part, women bear traditional male control over every aspect of their bodies, speech and behaviour with stoicism, as part of their fate, but exposure to media, the work of women's groups and a greater degree of mobility have seen the beginnings of women's rights awareness seep into the secluded world of women. But if women begin to assert their rights, however tentatively, the response is harsh and immediate: the curve of honour killings has risen parallel to the rise in awareness of rights.’

Key factors in this situation include lack of access to basic social services of health, water, education and income sources and denial of participation in communal matters.

In the tribal areas the situation of women is particularly difficult (Amnesty International, 1999, FATA PPA, 2003). They are missing from the traditional tribal tales of valor and in most of the literature on FATA. Their particular situation was until recently ignored in the more general concern about the position of women in Pakistan as a whole (Amnesty International, 1999).

The recent FATA PPA report, some of it, like this thesis, based on a PRA approach, describes their situation:

> ‘Among those that suffer a state of ill-being in FATA, the condition of women is the worst. Women in FATA have little say in decision-making at an individual, family, or community level. They have limited access to natural resources. They often own no tangible asset such as land or a home. Inheritance rights are denied despite state and Islamic law. Women’s access to opportunities for human development through education and better health care are severely restricted. The identity of women in FATA is drawn from that of their male next of kin – they do not have an identity in their own right.

> Lack of political, social, natural, produced, and human capitals restrict women's opportunities to achieve well-being. Moreover, widespread gender-based violence, including customary practices like *wulwar* and giving women in compensation to settle disputes, increases women's vulnerability. If anti-poverty policies and action in FATA are gender-blind, they will fail to target those that are most vulnerable.' (FATA PPA, 2003: 94)

The PPA Report lays particular stress on the problem of identity and of lack of access to decisions**:**

> 'Women's identity was linked with that of their closest male family member – fathers, brothers or husbands. As the male-dominated tribal identity is the key determinant of social capital, women reflected this capital as an appendage to males rather than in their own right. Women's access to political capital was perhaps the most restricted. Women had no significant role in decision-making. They had little say in issues that affected themselves, their households, or the community.' **(**FATA PPA, 2003: 22-23)

My own research experiences of working with tribal village women bear out this point. An example can be taken from a discussion with a group of women intended to gain their consent to and participation in opening a girl's school in their village..

> Q What do you think of your daughters' education within your village?
> A We will ask our men.
> Q Which place in your village would be most suitable for girls to attend a school in your village?
> A The houses belong to our husbands, fathers-in-law or brothers-in-law so they will have to say something in this regard. [One woman turned to her young son of about 10 years of age] Go quickly to the *hujra,* ask your grandfather to come here or let you know what should I say to these guests about the girls' school thing.
> Q O.K. let us assume we get your men' permission. Will you be interested to participate in the school's mothers' committee?

A We are in darkness [*tora-shpa*], like animals, we don't know anything.

Q It doesn't matter if you can't read and write, will you still be interested?

A We will have to ask our mothers-in-law and husbands.

Q Do you have any questions for us, please don't hesitate in asking?

A When are you coming again? May be we will be able to answer all your questions.

Women within the Family

The last quotation illustrates the way in which a woman's family position makes it difficult for her to take part in a decision of public interest (whether to open a girls' school). In the following sections I will first look in more detail at women's position within the family and then at their position outside the family. I will then look at some of the factors that make this situation difficult to change.

Marriages

The clearest example of the economic basis of marriage is provided by the custom of *Walwar* (bride price). Head-money or bride price is the amount paid for marrying off a daughter to the bridegroom's family. This forms part of the marriage negotiations and is determined at the time of engagement. In accordance with the *Jirga's* decision the bridegroom's parents/family agree to pay in cash the agreed amount to the girl's parents on the day of marriage. Usually but depending upon the financial standing of the participants, a part of the payment is made on the spot. The rest of the money is paid on the marriage day or even later, may-be, in installments. The consent of the girl is not thought necessary in such lifetime deals (Ashraf, 1962, Amnesty International, 1999).

Discussion with my mother suggested that this practice was partly based on poverty and an eye to the interests of both bride and family. It was an insurance against mistreatment since a family would be unlikely to allow an expensive bride to die for lack of medical treatment and it did not mean that the woman lost all rights. She

herself she joked would have sold all her six daughters if my father had allowed her to do so and been rich. As it was people who were rich might not demand money for their daughters since they could afford this. One could not blame the poor for doing so.

> 'Yes one will have to pay a reasonable price for a woman, she is not something without a value, to be taken just for nothing for a marriage, but you can't buy a woman's head, which means by paying money for her, you can't kill her, her head is not sold to you, if such a thing happens this will be avenged, this is how our *Dasteer* (custom) is. And of course her parents no matter how poor will always spend some of the money, taken from the bridegroom's side on her bridal requirements, such as small jewellery, clothes and some little make-up things. Now people who are becoming better off; even the not so better off ones who may also try to copy the better off and the educated ones, either don't take money at all or even pay dowry to their daughters, but the majority of people are ignorant and poor so you can't blame them.'

The deciding factors for fixing the bride price are described by Ashraf (1962: 53).

> 'The first is her personal charm which often includes her physical health and the capacity to do hard work…The second factor is the social status of the girl's family; the higher the status of the father, the more will be the price of his daughter…the respect a woman commands in the family of her in-laws is directly proportionate to the amount paid for her; they consider her as a precious commodity and she boasts of it through out her life.'

The woman also can be proud of the price that can be paid. I jokingly once asked my mother, what was your head price? She said, still a touch of pride in her voice:

> 'At the time I got married, the Rupee had great value and your father was working for the *Parangioon* (the British) and he was the *Khan Bahadur's* (our tribal chief's) so he could pay an handsome amount though I was very young,

hardly 13 years old. We were poor not in a bargaining position but I was beautiful, so they paid Rs 500 for me, a big amount at that time.'

Such marriages are not a matter of choice. Amnesty International (1999) describes the situation in neighboring NWFP.

> 'Islamic law (as interpreted in Pakistan) requires the explicit consent of both marriage partners to the marriage; the consent of the *wali* [legal guardian] is not required. Under the Constitution of Pakistan anyone above 18 is no longer a minor and does not need a parent's permission to marry. In customary laws and practice, by contrast, women are not allowed to choose a spouse; their consent is not asked and their dissent punished. Women interviewed in the NWFP indicated that in only 8 % of rural and 37 % of urban households are women allowed to select their husbands but further questioning revealed that this right was exercised with their elders' consent. The survey concludes: "To decide independently [in the choice of a marriage partner] is not 'traditional' and is considered sin"'

If women are commodities and the society is poor there is pressure on the parents to realize her value as early as possible. Early marriages are in fact common in FATA. Ashraf (1962) reports that 20 per cent of brides were below 15 years and 91 per cent below 20 years of age. His data also suggest that the poorer the family the earlier girls marry.

> 'A person of small means would very much like to dispose of the asset at the first opportunity because this would not only help him pay off his debts or purchase necessities of life but would also relieve him of obligation of feeding an additional mouth…The cattle value of a bride was usually equivalent to two buffaloes or three cows with or without some cash price.' (Ashraf, 1962:49-53)

Child marriages may benefit the parents. It is unlikely they benefit the brides themselves. They drop out of school and their health suffers. Pakistani girls who

become pregnant before the age of 14 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than are those twice their age. (See World Bank, 2005)

A rather different example of the use of women to further family interests is provided by the practice of *Swara* 'the giving in marriage of the daughter or sister of the killer to the son or brother of the person killed, so that the enmity is ended once and for all' (Afridi, 2003). '*Swara'* literally means 'female riding' as girls would be sent to the aggrieved family on a horse or camel. Commonly they are second or third wives and they are often married to older men. As their arrival often fails to end the enmity between families they may be mistreated for the rest of their lives.

Nevertheless there are always exceptions. A village woman from the Wazir tribe in FR Bannu in FATA, said:

> 'My own aunt, my father's sister, was given as a *swara* to the village on the other side of the stream from our village. We killed two people from them. They killed back one from us and for the other one the *jirga* decided on a *swara*. My aunt once told me you wouldn't be there if I hadn't been a *swara*. She said that through *swaras* the blood of warring tribes mixes up for peace. My aunt told me that unlike many other *swaras*, she was quite happy with her husband who would secretly tell her 'I wish your brother hadn't killed my nephew. You were any way my *qismat* (fate) and so I would anyway marry you, then I would daily take you to your parents across the stream.' My aunt was not allowed for a long time to visit us but in her later life she could do so.'

A final example from the field of marriage is provided by *badal* marriages. Usually '*badal*' means revenge or retaliation. However, in context of females the word '*badal'* is also used for exchange marriages in the tribal society. Girl/s and boy/s from one family are married to another family in exchange of girl/s and boy/s. Most of the time these decisions are taken by elder family members and females are not

consulted. Sometimes even the men's consent is not sought (Afridi, 2003, FATA PPA, 2003).

The practice of *badal* is seen as reducing the costs of marriage and cements bonds within a clan. Once again its effects are not inevitably bad. I asked my mother how our father, an educated man exposed to British culture, had decided that two each of my sisters and brothers should have exchange marriages with our cousins. She said:

> 'Is there any problem in their marriages? No! Nothing is ideal, as long as the couples are happy, *badal* is good. It keeps matters within the family, the boys and girls know each other; your brothers and sisters were literate and knew what was happening. But in *badal* if one couple is not happy, it's bad for the other couple. Your father was very worried about who would marry his educated daughters who can't do any heavy work in the village, so he arranged their marriage with your uncle with educated children who was facing the same problem, and with the grace of Allah everything went well.'

My mother, however, acknowledged that things were not always so well arranged.

> But back in the village people are very cruel, they would force girls to have *badal* marriages. One woman was not happy, she didn't like her husband at all; her husband cut her nose. Her brother who had married her husband's sister in *badal*, was very happy with his wife. However, her family tried to force him to do the same to his wife. He didn't but their marriage life became very strained. Older men give their daughters in marriage to get younger girls for themselves. They don't have shame. Yes, it's bad back home, it's the poverty and people don't realize their *Deen* [religion] well.'

Workload

As described above, part of the economic value of women lies in their capacity for work. As in the case of machines, the more work they do the more valuable they

are likely to be. According to the Asian Development Bank report (2003) women are massively overburdened while fulfilling their role at all three levels, the reproductive, productive and communal spheres of life. As the ADB explains, it is a key feature of this work that most of it is done within the sphere of the family.

According to the ADB females are totally constrained by the patriarchal tribal traditions. For example, in their reproductive role they are rearing children, looking after the elderly and sick, doing household chores from dawn to dusk but are not able to go out from own home for any purpose say even to a health center, to a school and meeting some one even from own village without the permission of family men, or they could be killed. Similarly in her productive role she is involved in agriculture, managing farms and crops, collecting forestry products, water collection, fetching of fuel and making crafts and numerous other productive activities. Against all this she is denied the right of inheritance and ownership of productive assets[1].

My own interviewees made similar points:

> 'You can see [women] side by side with their men in fields sowing, weeding, harvesting, they work from morning to dark. Furthermore they bear domestic violence and social and emotional pressures. Despite this strength and the massive work that they perform, they have no income or ownership of any considerable kind and cash, and any substantial say in anything.' (Tribal man, who had become a professor)

The Issue of Honor

The contracts of marriage are enforced by tribal conceptions of honor. There is no written material specifically on the 'Honor system' in FATA. It is clear, however,

[1] This statement is often made. In practice a few women do own assets. Others have the use of assets although male members can sell them at will. The situation varies in different parts of the tribal areas and with the age and status of the woman. Widows, for example, are much more likely to own property than married women. In general married women have no assets.

that this follows the customs of Pakistan in general but almost certainly in a more extreme form.

Within Pakistan the system is described by Amnesty International (1999).

> ‘Women are seen to embody the honour of the men to whom they 'belong', .. they must guard their virginity and chastity. By being perceived to enter an 'illicit' sexual relationship, a woman defiles the honour of her guardian and his family. Hina Jilani, lawyer and human rights activist says, ’The right to life of women in Pakistan is conditional on their obeying social norms and traditions.’’ ..
>
> ‘Women in Pakistan live in fear. They face death by shooting, burning or killing with axes, if they are deemed to have brought shame on the family. They are killed for supposed 'illicit' relationships, for marrying men of their choice, for divorcing abusive husbands. They are even murdered by their kin if they are raped as they are thereby deemed to have brought shame on their family. The truth of the suspicion does not matter -- merely the allegation is enough to bring dishonor on the family and therefore justifies the slaying. …The isolation and fear of women living under such threats are compounded by state indifference to and complicity in women's oppression. Police almost invariably take the man's side in honour killings or domestic murders, and rarely prosecute the killers. Even when the men are convicted, the judiciary ensures that they usually receive a light sentence, reinforcing the view that men can kill their female relatives with virtual impunity.’

The system of honour and honour killings applies to women of all ages. The killings themselves are often carried out on a small pretext and based on rumor rather than fact. A father could kill his daughter for wanting to marry the wrong man. A daughter, sister or wife could also be killed to settle scores with a man who might have publicly ridiculed the family patriarch. The woman may be implicated in order that her death may bring financial compensation from another family. What matters is not what has happened but what is said. As a result women live in fear of

losing their reputation. If they do, they cannot defend themselves. Their 'fault' is cleared only by death. Men by contrast may benefit from double standards.

These killings are carried out by close relatives (brothers or fathers as well as husbands). For women's behaviour is a family matter and it is for the family to put it right. Men who carry out an honour killing are admired. It's the people's perception how a man's honour is determined (Amnesty International, 1999, FATA PPA 2003).

The interviewees refereed repeatedly to honour killings. A village woman from the Wazir tribe in FR Bannu in FATA made many of the points identified above. The woman began by endorsing the family code that honour killings are supposed to enforce:

> 'If a woman is having an affair it should be checked in time to avoid the shame she could bring to her family; this can't be allowed, every one will start doing it, for Allah's sake if you fancy a woman marry her, but now a days things are changing. I know a few women (with eyes wide open and great caution in her voice) and men are having secret affairs, even the married ones. We are leaving behind the *Angraizoon* (British/western people). Myself and a few others know this is happening in our village but, you know, no one talks about it, and the close male relatives of the women really don't know of such things happening.'

The interview continued with an implicit defence of the double standard for men and women. It is women who are expected to uphold morality and it is, in any case, public knowledge rather than the liaisons themselves that do the damage.

> 'It's the women who should be guarding themselves from such temptations, not so much the men, men are like bathed white horses [a pushtu proverb meaning men always remain clean]; they do everything among themselves also [referring to homosexuality] and people know that's happening. The problem is created when two men fancy one boy or the relatives of the boy

> stands up against it. But once such things get out of the four walls, for example a provocative remark is enough, then it's a serious honour problem.'

The woman went on to stress the lifelong consequences of these issues of honour:

> 'And you know it's easy to kill the woman; she is at home anyhow, but the man runs away, he is chased no doubt but then most of the time they manage to get out of the country as well, so many have gone to Dubai and Sharja as labourers. And it also depends upon the resources and the number of men available in the family to avenge its honour. Poorer families and families lacking men can't avenge and have to live in disgrace. Sometimes such families have to wait till their financial position improves or their boys grow up and bring back the honour or have to migrate from the village.'

And often, she said, there is no real basis for the killing.

> 'But let me also tell you that many women are killed because there are just rumors about them which are so easy to create, and also to create an excuse to kill a man who doesn't have male siblings to get at his property and wealth.'

Family Tensions and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is widespread in Pakistan and more so in the tribal areas. Women get beaten at home by husbands or other male family members such as the brother-in-law or father-in-law. Girls are beaten by brothers for petty things like a meal not cooked properly or a shirt not washed on time (ADB, 2003).

One of the interviewees, a 20-year-old married woman, said:

> 'This [where the group meeting was held] is my parent's house and I am married with a two-year-old daughter to a man who works in Baluchistan. He comes on leave after 12 to 18 months for a period of one or two months. When he comes on leave then I move to his parent's home in our village. I do this because my

father-in-law is very cruel, he beats his wife and daughters-in-laws and he has already killed one daughter-in-law by pushing her into a well in their house. So I am scared to live there without my husband. According to our customs, my husband gives all his salary to his father and gives me very little amount for our daughter. He is a very obedient son of his father and wouldn't listen to any word against him. Thanks to Allah that my parents are not poor. But here all the time I face negative remarks of not being settled with my in-laws etc. I wish I was not totally dependent on my parents, had a home of my own and could do something.'

The tensions this woman describes have their origins in the extended family, in the poverty which means that her husband is away and there are many claims on his income, and in the traditions that blame her for not settling with a violent family.

So factors in the widespread domestic violence may include the prevailing poverty and lack of work, the close proximity within which members of an extended family live and the local culture and traditions. Families who live very close together in the same compound may fall out. Men who lack work and self-esteem may take out their frustrations on their wives. Men who are afraid that their wives may involve them in feuds or killing may seek to control them through violence. According to the FATA PPA Report (2003), women complain that gambling often leads to domestic violence or even to the sale of women to pay a debt.

Whatever the reasons the presence of the honour system means that the women cannot easily leave home. The plight of those that do is illustrated by the village woman quoted earlier.

'My husband got interested in another woman and married her. He started beating me more frequently and eventually divorced me. He kept all my four children with him and his second wife. I still remember the eyes of my youngest one-year-old son fixed at me leaning against the mud wall while I

> was pushed out of his father's home. My ex-husband dropped me at my brother's house. I haven't seen my children for the last eight years except one daughter who got married in a village not very far from my parent's village.'

Tribal Feuds and Rivalries

The tribal society is divided by tribal rivalries, enmities and feuds that run through generations.

> 'Enmity is also a factor that identifies households that are poor. Land disputes are a major cause of enmity entailing loss of livelihood and putting the lives of feuding families and tribes at risk, as disputes tend to turn bloody. The resulting sense of insecurity and anxiety reduce human security and increase vulnerability.' (FATA PPA, 2003: 52)

The worst affected by these feuds are women and children. When the male breadwinner of a woman's family is killed, she is often pushed into extreme poverty since women are rarely provided with the education and skills to earn a living. Younger widows are either pushed into marrying other male close relatives of their husbands or have to live a life of total dependency. According to a recent report most poor tribal women are denied the safety net of *zakat* (charity), a result of corruption and male control over its distribution (FATA PPA 2003).

A 26-year-old widow of my maternal first cousin who was recently (late 2004) killed due to a tribal feud, and who is the mother of four very young children illustrated the problems that result from these killings and also the way they are family rather than individual matters:

> 'My husband's brother who is a chronic heroin addict had killed a person 20 years back in the nearby village. They in turn killed my husband and wounded my small son who was in his father's lap at that time. They didn't want to kill the killer, as he has been a nuisance and burden for all of us. They killed my

husband the main source of income for all our family and a wonderful and popular person.'

This killing had effectively left her penniless, and dependent on the goodwill of her in-laws and charity.

> 'For how long do you expect people to help you financially? People still do help but this doesn't come to me and my children; there are other priorities, my mother-in-law and my brothers-in-law and their wives decide how what is available is to be spent. Anyhow ours is a poor village, people can't fulfill their own needs. I have to mix and dye my attire with earth, showing no interest in life to avoid scandals. My son still has the pieces of the bullet in his leg. These couldn't be removed in the Bannu hospital and I have had to beg people around to take us to Peshawar for treatment. With the passage of time my difficulties are growing. Unlike in the past, my parents wouldn't have me for more than a few days; my father fears that my children's and my burden might get shifted to him. My children are too young and I know nothing that will help me earn.'

The village woman quoted above provides another example:

> 'We had three brothers; some time ago, our enemies in a tribal feud over a piece of land killed two of my brothers at a time; they were young, tall and very handsome lying bathed in blood in twin beds side by side with their own *Qamar band* (bullet belts) still around their bodies; leaving behind children and wives at the mercy of our only one remaining brother with very few resources. We were not poor at all, my father is still remembered as a rich *malik*, but after all this we have become so poor. Everything, the *jirga*, food, clothing etc needs money and we have no one left to earn, our land can't be cultivated any more, it's disputed.'

These killings both reflect and reinforce the pervasive presence of weapons. A tribal family without their own guns is considered to be poor. On entering a tribal area the first thing one notices is the display of weapons by men wearing them. Women oil the guns which are kept handy and loaded at night for security. The first thing a woman does in the morning is to put the gun in a safe place so the children do not let them off by accident. The sense of danger and threat makes it even harder for a woman to leave the family in which she is living. This along with her lack of marketable skills makes her even more dependent on her in-laws and on men.

Women outside the Family

In Pakistan social life revolves around the family, and social status depends on the honor of a family's women. For this reason every effort is made to limit contact between the sexes. As illustrated below the life of tribal women outside the family is heavily restricted.

Purdah

The rigid tribal culture severely restricts women's ability to go out of the house. If she does so and meets a man from outside the family, she is expected to turn away (Gillett, 2001). As the FATA PPA Report (2003: 81):

> 'Often women are not allowed to visit homes belonging to other tribes in the same village. Access to outside the *mohalla* [neighborhood] or village sphere is restricted to attendance at funerals and marriages. Women afflicted by ill-health are taken to nearby towns or to Peshawar for treatment only when local remedies prove inadequate. Women are only able to access places outside their homes and villages if traveling together with their households.'

The increasing power of the Taliban in FATA has meant that the mobility of women is further restricted. This restricted mobility has grave consequences on their life in relation to difficulties in achieving their participation in their own and village developmental processes such as education, health and income generation. (See ADB, 2003; FATA PPA, 2003; FATA SDP, 2006; World Bank, 2005)

Once again there are different views on these matters. I still remember with dread the early teenage days when I was repeatedly and forcefully told by my mother and other female family members that I had to wear a *burqa* and was no more allowed to go out to play with my twin brother. That felt like controlling me and the only explanation given was that it was against the culture. My mother, however, saw things differently:

> 'What is wrong in covering oneself? You wear different clothes for different occasions, like you go to marriages with different kinds of clothes or to attend funerals. So when you go out from your home to a different place, *purdah* keeps you contained within yourself. One feels secure and also is not guilty of causing gossip about the family. And the more you are modest, the more you are trusted and the more you are free to go out.'

My aunt had similar views:

> 'Prostitutes show themselves because they have to and good women instead of copying must pity them'

Research by the World Bank (2005) supports some of these points:

> 'In some cases, however, purdah can even enhance female mobility. According to one woman, age 45, in northern Punjab: 'I had no mobility problems with *purdah*....It ensures respect. In fact if a woman with *purdah* goes out, she will be respected. If a school girl has to go alone and she is wearing a *burqa*, she will be respected more.''

Ownership of Assets

Women in many developing countries, including Pakistan, are not able to own productive capital or to inherit property. According to the Asian Development Bank (2000:10):

> 'Women lack ownership of productive resources…there are very few who have access and control over these resources…financial institutions do not cater to women's credit needs due to the underlying assumption of women's role in reproductive sphere.'

In this the situation of tribal women is among worst. As we have seen they themselves are sold and owned as if they were property. In general women do not have a share in property Daughters, wives, sisters and mothers, may help to produce money but very few get it (Afridi, 2003).

Lack of Participation in the Jirga or in Public Organizations

Women do not take part in the 'political' life of FATA or play a key role in its public organizations as an NGO worker interviewed for the project said:

> 'The tribal society is mostly run on the norms and rules defined by the elders and *jirga*…The *maliks* and *khans* are invisible rulers who decide the fate and future of the majority.'

The main collective decision making bodies in FATA are the *jirgas*. These are made up of men. It is unimaginable that a woman should take part in them.

In general women's participation in public matters is very low. For example, women do not serve in the political agent's office and in other institutions such as forestry, health and education the female ratio is also extremely low.

So far in the history of FATA, there has never been any female member elected or nominated to the national parliament or senate. There is limited female

representation through elected councils that advise the political agencies and which are supposed to have female members. These councils do offer an opportunity for women, if the moment a limited one. A senior government official interviewed for the project told me that:

> 'The women who came forward and became members of the agency councils or even in district councils in the other rural areas are either the close relatives of the *maliks* or are from very poor or minority families brought in to fill in the blanks by the influential people. Still, by being women they will make a difference for women in general in the long run. The women's development NGOs should capacitate and facilitate more and more women at village level to take part in the local elections.'

Discrimination in the Name of Islam

According to one of our respondents:

> 'The religious clergy, one of the most influential parts of society, conveys a very wrong and negative perception of the religion. The influential people such as the clergy and *maliks* have to be taken along if the situation is to change.'

As we have seen Islam has a huge influence on the lives of people in FATA. However the practices we have described and which it is seen as endorsing are not Islamic 'Crimes of honour were pre-Islamic practices [with].. no real basis in Islam' (Cowasjee, 2003) . More generally, as the following illustrates, the Quran supports a woman's position.

> 'Khawlah was a Muslim woman whose husband Aws at a moment of anger pronounced this statement: "You are to me as the back of my mother." This was held by pagan Arabs to be a statement of divorce which freed the husband from any conjugal responsibility but didn't leave the wife free to leave the husband's home or to marry another man. Having heard these words

> from her husband, Khawlah was in a miserable situation. She went straight to the Prophet of Islam to plead her case. The prophet was of the opinion that she should be patient since there seemed to be no way out. Khawla kept arguing with the Prophet in an attempt to save her suspended marriage. Shortly, the Quran intervened; Khawla's plea was accepted. The divine verdict abolished this iniquitous custom. One full chapter (Chapter 58) of the Quran whose title is *Almujadilah* or "The woman who is arguing" was devoted to this incident, "Allah has heard and accepted the statement of the woman who pleads with you (the prophet) concerning her husband and carries her complaint to Allah, and Allah hears the arguments between both of you for Allah hears and sees all things...." (58:1). A woman in the Quranic conception has the right to argue even with the Prophet of Islam himself. No one has the right to instruct her to be silent. She is under no obligation to consider her husband the one and only reference in matters of law and religion. (Kingston 1995)

Marriage in Islam is a mutually agreed social contract between a woman and a man designed for the benefit of both:

> ‘And among His signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect.’ (Qur'an 30:2 1)

According to Islamic Law, women cannot be forced to marry anyone without their consent.

The basic concept of *Purdah* (veil) in Islam is primarily intended not to control women but to enhance their status, ensure protection from becoming a sex symbol and allow them to realize themselves as a whole human being. Women in Islam are allowed to inherit property.

The respondents were very clear that Islamic injunctions were deliberately confused and used against the empowerment of women. As a senior government official in Islamabad remarked:

> 'People tend to give a religious color to all issues; even though in reality, the explanation, reasoning that our practical religion Islam gives for all acts and activities is almost always in contrast to the popular decadent opinion held by uneducated members of our clergy'

Women and the Legal System

Pakistan's courts do not function in FATA. However, in the context of honor killing, the situation in many rural areas of Pakistan is similar to that in FATA. The assumption is that the killings are a family matter and a subject for negotiation between families rather than something that inevitably calls for prosecution. Supreme Court lawyer Hina Jilani explained the matter to an Amnesty International delegation:

> "The law really facilitates such killings. Killings are private offences, against the individual, not the state, so who will bring and pursue the charges of murder? If the father or brother kills a woman, the family of the girl will not pursue the case, as in their eyes no wrong has been done. If the husband kills in the family home, his family are the witnesses but they will not testify against him. There is no chance of bringing the killer to book... The prosecution case collapses on almost all the scenarios of an honour killing: In *karo-kari* cases there is no aggrieved party to pursue the case, society as a whole approves of the killing and usually there are no prosecution witnesses as nobody testifies against a family member. Since the killing takes place in a family context, forgiveness, voluntary or otherwise, is almost inevitable. If a brother kills his sister on grounds of honour, her guardian, her father can forgive his son. Courts have the discretion under the law to prosecute even in cases where the culprit is forgiven but this very rarely happens.' (Amnesty International,1999)

As a result:

> ‘Women's lives are by and large confined to the private sphere with little access to information outside their homes. As their lives are inevitably governed by the traditions of the community and tribe, women in Pakistan do not enjoy or benefit from the fundamental rights recognized in the Constitution of Pakistan nor the provisions of Muslim personal law. At the same time men have used the parallel legal regimes to which they have access whenever it benefited them.’ (Amnesty International,1999)

Conclusion

Women in FATA are entangled in a vicious circle of family, and tribal norms and customs. The tribal customs have taken away the status that Islam has given to them. Their potential is restricted by lack of access to and ownership of assets and decision making. As a result of all this they are in danger of losing self esteem and giving up their identity to male relatives. Their limited mobility, excessive poverty and lack of a support system outside the family make it difficult to change their condition and position.

Despite these problems it is also true that the tribal culture, like any other in the world, is not single dimensional, homogeneous and static. It varies geographically, and it evolves. For example, the dry areas are very poor. In these areas the poor ask a bride price for their daughters. In the irrigated areas where crops are grown throughout the year the people are better off, and the practice of bride price is even discouraged. (FATA ADB 2003) My mother who moved to Peshawar on her marriage found that girls had dowries and she believed it showed how worthless they are thought to be.

To generalize and assume that everything happening to women in FATA is wrong and should be changed fast would also be a big mistake. Women themselves may see benefits in practices that outsiders condemn. Like my mother they may take

pride in their culture and their own position within it. There are reasons for the traditional structures in place in the tribal society around which people live their lives. Understanding these complexities and only then putting in place acceptable alternate and 'better' systems is a key requirement in attempts to change the status quo for the sake of women's development.

Chapter 6
Developmental Status of Women

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the poor social status of tribal women in FATA. The focus was on culture and thus on traditional practices such as *swara*, honor killing, and *badal* and their justification through a misinterpretation of Islam. As was seen women in FATA face all kinds of discrimination: they are denied freedom of movement, the ownership of property and a say in decisions.

This chapter is about what I call the developmental status of women in FATA: that is, about how far their poor social status is combined with a life characterized by poverty, illiteracy and poor health. The chapter looks at the prevailing developmental status of the population of FATA to see how this interacts with the social status of women. For this purpose it looks at the prevalence and causes of poverty in FATA and at problems in meeting basic human needs for water, health and education. It also looks specifically at the situation of women in these respects and the reasons for this.

The chapter draws from four main sources: the FATA Sustainable Development Plan (FATA SDP, 2006): the Asian Development Bank report on FATA Rural Development Project (ADB, 2003), the FATA Participatory Poverty Assessment (FATA PPA, 2003) and the various interviews undertaken for the research. The first three documents were prepared in collaboration with and approval from the Government of Pakistan. They provide the most recent official data on FATA but do not particularly discuss the situation of tribal women. As will be seen their statistics nevertheless suggest large gender disparities. The research interviews were used to support, illustrate or cast light on these data and to provide insight into how tribal people, particularly women, feel about the issues.

Definition of poverty

Official reports tend to define poverty in terms of monthly income or expenditure. Thus the ADB study (2003) followed the Pakistan Government operational definition of poverty as per capita monthly incomes of below 909 rupees. (At present, one dollar is worth about 60 rupees, and the current poverty threshold is 879 rupees so that the figure is less than half a dollar or 25 p a day).

Recent research shows that people themselves look at poverty from additional perspectives. The PPA study (2003) used PRA methods like those employed in the present study to explore this issue. The tribal women and men suggested that the following factors marked out poverty: landlessness or ownership of just small areas of land; lack of livestock; lack of nutritious food; poor quality of clothing or housing; unemployment; dependency on others for food and income; women working to supplement household income; ill health and disability; increased risk of conflict; lack of access to public services; lack of influence and powerlessness; and belonging to a powerless tribe. In the same study the women pointed out that lack of access to clean drinking water was also an indicator of poverty.

According to FATA PPA (2003:52) ownership of arable land, live stock and access to medicinal herbs determines the degree of poverty in FATA.

> 'Land, especially arable land, is an asset that the poor covet the most. Land ownership is directly proportional to the well-being of a household. The more land owned, the greater the well-being experienced by a household. The poor own very little or no land, and the very poor are landless.'

The ADB report (2003) gives an even wider perspective on poverty in the case women in FATA arguing that they are faced with poverty of opportunity, poverty of dignity, poverty of access and control, and poverty of social support.

Evidence that Poverty is generally high

Irrespective of definition poverty is clearly widespread in FATA. The ADB Report (2003) asserts that the low socio-economic status of the tribal people is grossly apparent, but not statistically clear. There are no statistically valid surveys and their lack was frustrating for government planners. For example, the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey had not been implemented in FATA.

In 2003, 60% of the people in the ADB project area were classified as below the official poverty level with over 80% in some villages. Even this estimate was said to almost certainly understate real poverty in the more isolated communities. Using information from participatory self-evaluations, even the "better off" members in communities are barely above the Pakistan Government poverty threshold.

This poverty in FATA, it has been suggested, results from its historical political and social isolation; a legal system administered through civil servants who seek to maintain the status quo; poor quality and coverage of institutions responsible for the provision of basic services; exclusion of women from economic life; lack of effective skill training to enable the labor force to shift from low productivity to high productivity sectors; and inadequate credit and institutional support for micro-enterprise for low income groups (ADB, 2003, FATA SDP, 2006). To this analysis one could add continued conflict, both local and international and the need to support a relatively large population on sparse and inadequate soil.

The overall economy of FATA is chiefly pastoral, with some agriculture practiced in a few fertile valleys. As can be seen from Table 6.1 a low percentage of the land is cultivated or used for forestry. Animals not only provide important dietary requirements but also dung to maintain the quality of the soil and raw materials such wool and hide. Historically, and particularly during the Afghanistan war, the region became a major centre for opium production and trafficking.

Table 6.1 FATA: Land use indicators 2001-02

S. No	Indicators	Area in (000) Hectare	%
1	Geographical Area	2722.04	
2.	Cultivated Area	198.75	
3	Cultivated Area as %age of geographical area		7.30
4	Irrigated area	79.89	
5	Irrigated area as %age of cultivated area		40.20
6	Current Fallow	27.94	
7	Current fallow as a %age of cultivated area		14.06
8	Forest Area	44.40	
9	Forest area as %age of geographical area		1.63
10	Uncultivated	2533.19	
11	Not available for cultivation	2323.13	
12	Cultivated land per Tractor	70.00	

Source: GoNWFP (2002-03, 2005) cited in FATA SDP (2006)

These figures are low compared with the national average. For example, 82 per cent of the cultivated area of Pakistan is said to be irrigated. In the country as a whole there are 9 people for each irrigated hectare. In FATA the same figure is 36 (FATA SDP, 2006).

Poverty leads to overexploitation and unsustainable management of natural resources. The poor people mostly depend on the exploitation of natural resources for their survival and they are the first ones to suffer from the effects of environmental degradation. According to the FATA SDP (2006), deforestation has lead to a scarcity of wood for fuel and timber. The hills have become unable to retain rainwater, leading to floods, erosion and drought. A combination of drought and over-grazing has resulted in the decline of the land available for livestock and affected their health.

Despite the poor quality of much of the land the FATA SDP report (2006) found that the local people mostly depended on subsistence farming. Others rely on remittances from family members working outside the area or abroad, short-term unskilled employment in construction projects, or enlisting in the local security forces.

There are very few industries in the area. The lack of a legal system in FATA makes it difficult for industries to obtain credit facilities. No one wants to invest money where contracts cannot be legally enforced or land legally occupied. The government's policy of subsidising electricity for industry and supplying it free to households has led to disinterest on the part of the electric company. Power cuts and low voltages combine with the poor condition of roads to discourage industrial development.

The chances of overcoming these problems of under-development have not been enhanced by the focus of the administration on law and order. All three reports (ADB (2003); FATA PPA (2003); FATA SDP (2006) have pointed out fundamental problems in the way FATA's Political Administration system has worked which they see as largely contributing to the poverty of the tribal people. This system is marked by bad planning, elite dominated and vested interest driven decision making, and a lack of transparency and accountability. This has led to a lack of growth in terms of social, economic and political development. Some influential and politically active sections of the society in FATA have benefited. The grass roots have not.

According to the FATA SDP report (2006) the lack of economic development has led some of the people in FATA to turn to more profitable options such as cross border smuggling, trade in drugs and arms and crimes like kidnapping. Illicit trade across the Afghan border avoids customs duty and has also affected the economy. The interviews for my own research reflected these pressures through references to

unemployment (a common theme), lack of credit facilities and debt. In the feasibility study one respondent from FR Bannu in FATA, had said,

> 'There are no credit facilities, people take loans from relatives and neighbors on very high interest rate in desperate need situations such as for consumption and health purposes. Families are in debt for generations; the young boys who go to the gulf states in search of work have to pay high amounts for buying their visas which the families have to pay back in decades; there is an acute need for some sort of credit facility'

Particular impact of poverty on women

In the light of all the above, we can easily deduce the economic situation of women in FATA. In a country where those who do not own land are generally very poor, women generally do not own assets. In this respects their situation reflects that of other women. In an unpublished background paper in 2004 Helena Wall of the Commonwealth Secretariat argues that:

> 'Indigenous women suffer from higher levels of poverty, largely due to their unequal opportunities with respect to land (indigenous women are often discriminated against by state practice and laws, as well as by customary and traditional practice and laws)'

The notion of control in the patriarchal and tribal culture expands to all spheres of life. The FATA PPA report (2003) stated that the exclusion of women from paid work, the lack of recognition of their reproductive roles and their unpaid farm work and their lack of ownership of assets have all exacerbated the poverty and low status of women. Women have a heavy workload inside and outside their families. They depend totally on their men, they lack confidence and skills, their freedom of movement is restricted, and they lack access to the market. All this makes it almost impossible for them to move from being unpaid laborers to self-employment or their own entrepreneurships.

As a result women and their families remain entangled in a vicious circle of poverty and debt. Helena Wall also argues that:

> 'Many indigenous women, while playing a significant role in the traditional economies of indigenous communities, are not part of the cash economy, thus they are dependent on their husbands, sons or male relatives for money. At times of economic hardship, indigenous women are particularly prone to poverty.'

The ADB report (2003) and the FATA PPA report (2003) make similar comments.

Water and Sanitation

According to the FATA SDP report (2006: 33)

> 'The Majority of FATA is situated in the arid and semi arid zone with a low rate of annual precipitation. The geo-political changes in neighbouring Afghanistan resulted in a large scale human movement that adversely affected the forest reserves, which are important for watershed protection. The depletion of forest reserves resulted in decreased water retention capacity of soil. The ecological siting of FATA and its climatic conditions along with the degradation of its natural environment caused low recharge of ground water resources. This situation slowly resulted in drying up of many springs, streams and perennial watercourses in the area forcing people to rely on deep ground water sources.'

It goes on to list some of the consequences and further problems. These include:

- High operation and maintenance cost of ground water supply schemes compromising the supply to users.
- Politically motivated site selection of schemes resulting in limited coverage and benefits for users.

- No arrangements for basic sanitation in dense and major settlements causing health problems for residents and polluting nearest available water sources
- Limited institutional capacity of the Works & Services Department FATA to cope with the growing demands of the sector.
- Lack of technical skills of the users groups in operation and maintenance.

As a result 'A mere 54% of the population has access to clean drinking water, as compared to 75% for the settled districts of neighboring North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).' (ADB 2003: 4, 5) This has made life particularly difficult for poor women who are responsible for water for the household.

Scarcity of water and no proper supply system of clean drinking water appears to be among the priority needs of the ordinary people especially women in FATA. Our respondents repeatedly and forcefully mentioned this. For example, eight out of thirteen respondents who were interviewed in 2003/4 said water was the main issue in FATA. Almost all (5 out of 6) respondents from the NGOs/CBOs working in FATA also said this. One NGO worker said that in some tribal areas less than 20% people had access to drinking water.

Canals, rivers and streams were identified as some of the major sources of water. These are generally unhygienic as they are open to contamination. Usually women have the responsibility to fetch and manage water for daily family needs. In many places they have to travel long distances for this purpose.

Sanitation is a related issue. In some areas the physical growth of settlements without any basic sanitation arrangements has exposed the residents, especially children, women and the elderly, to health hazards. The FATA SDP report (2006) claimed that there had not any been attention to sanitation from the Government or donor agencies. No authentic figures on sanitation coverage were available. The 1998 Housing Census Report had claimed that 34% of the households had access to latrines inside the houses, 4.6% used shared latrines and 61.4% of the households had no latrines. However, no definition of latrine (flush or pit) was given in the

census report and it was therefore difficult to conclude what percentage of the population had access to safe sanitation.

Impact of Water Scarcity on Women

There is a lack of statistical evidence on the impact of water problems on women. My interviews, however, suggested that the impact is more severe than it is on men. This is mainly because everyone agrees that women have the main responsibility for collecting water for the household. This can be exhausting, time consuming and even dangerous. An NGO worker told us that that women were at high risk while bringing heavy pitchers of water from far away places. A female teacher teaching in FATA said the same and a Wazir woman believed that scarcity of water was the central debilitating factor for women. Even a male teacher from a *madrassa* in the Khyber Agency was aware of this difficulty faced by the tribal women.

Our interviews also suggested that **w**omen suffer more than men through lack of sanitation facilities. Both men and women go to the fields but men can go out any time, while women are restricted to the darkness of the evening and early morning.

Health

People's lack of awareness regarding safe drinking water, clean living conditions and basic health and hygiene measures combined with poor health services to produce many health problems. The FATA SDP report (2006:24) summarises some of the relevant statistics:

> 'The health indicators of FATA are rough estimates but even then indicate the poor condition of health in this area. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is estimated to be 87/1000 live-births and Maternal Mortality is estimated to be above 600/100,000 live-births. Looking at access to health services there is one health facility (Dispensary or Basic Health Unit (BHU) or Rural Heath Centre (RHC)) for every 50 square kilometres and even these are concentrated near the settled areas. The available bed strength is 1690 for the

> whole region (Directorate of Health Services FATA). There are no private hospitals in the area, however there are a few private health care providers; these include prayer leaders, faith healers and some doctors qualified from Afghanistan and the Russian states (not recognized by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Association).'

Detailed statistics on medical facilities and posts in FATA have been issued by various government departments, but the FATA SDP (2006) and ADB (2003) reports admitted that these are not always reliable.

They also reported that information about the disease burden was limited. It was thought that diarrhoea, pneumonia, fever and stomach problems abounded, in addition to the non communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension and angina. An NGO worker gave us examples of other diseases including malaria, typhoid, hepatitis a, b, and c, cholera, TB and arthritis. He also said that because of poverty families lack nutritional food and women get the leftovers and so suffer from anemia and malnutrition related diseases.

FATA SDP report (2006) reported problems of reproductive health magnified by lack of access and services. On the preventive side there was an urgent need both for drug addiction services including rehabilitation and also education about the danger of HIV. Counterfeit and out dated medicines were also a problem. The KK respondents also emphasised non-availability of medicines and staff in the rural health units; the unmonitored private practice by the government doctors serving in FATA whose charges are too high for the poor; unqualified health practitioners giving wrong diagnoses and medicine; and the unhygienic and outdated practices of the traditional birth attendants.

> 'In remote regions, the only accessible providers are faith healers and unqualified personnel. In serious illness they have to either stay and utilize whatever service is available or get loans or sell their assets to take the patient to the settled areas. This creates a serious disincentive to seek care at an early stage of the disease where the treatment would be less costly.' (FATA SDP,

2006: 27)

The FATA SDP report pointed out that geography and population density had an effect on health. The geographic distribution of the population needed to be considered in the planning of any health services. Investment in the densely populated agencies bordering Peshawar needed to be carefully balanced against the probability of duplicating high cost services already available there and interventions needed to be focused on the remote areas. At present, those with means sought care in the settled areas from the tertiary care hospitals and the specialists; the poor did not have this opportunity and their choice of providers was restricted to those available in the locality. Women, children, youth, elderly, and the disabled were dependant on others to access health services.

Impact of Poor Health Services on Women

Health services in FATA are predominantly provided by men. In 2003 there were, according to some figures supplied by the governor's secretariat for FATA, only 37 female doctors for the whole of FATA, a shortfall of 10 on the numbers that there were supposed to be. There are cultural taboos on women making use of health services provided by men. There is therefore a massive lack of needed medical care for women.

The interviewees gave other reasons why health services are particularly poor for women. They lack money and so they cannot access private doctors or pay for medicines. They cannot easily travel and so it is hard for them to make up for the lack of local facilities by traveling to larger towns or Peshawar. They are reliant on untrained Traditional Birth Attendants for care in their deliveries. They lack confidence and health awareness and so are vulnerable to STDs and HIV and prone to use superstitious remedies.

A quotation from a Wazir woman from FR Bannu shows the multiples pressures which failings in health services put upon women.

‘After divorce when I came to my brother’s house I knew life wouldn’t be easy. My brother had to leave for Dubai for a daily wager’s job. Here a daily wage would not allow him to support his own, and his two dead brothers’ children and wives and on top of all that, me as well. The young widows are not supposed to go out from the house but I as a divorcee do not have a respectable status. Therefore, all external work burdens came on my shoulders. Almost every week I would take either children, nephews/nieces or my sisters in laws to the doctors in the nearby Bannu city for treatment. The village dispensary is deserted. We would borrow money for buying medicine and paying doctors’ fees. My brother would pay off by sending money twice a year.’

‘I also kept a few sheep and goats and one cow and would also do sewing and making baskets to support myself. People would also give us *zakat*. But what happened was that my brother suddenly stopped sending money, and the city doctors and medicine shopkeepers started asking me for it. I sold every thing, each of my sheep, goat and cow and paid back a huge amount. I still have to pay around Rs 8000; medicines are expensive and so are the doctors’ fees. Then I had no other option but to become a domestic servant in Peshawar; at least my food, lodging etc are free and I am saving from my salary to pay off the loan; I miss my village and people. The women and children back home are at the mercy of circumstances.’

Education

The fullest and most recent account of education in FATA comes from the FATA SDP report. This makes many criticisms which I give below. It does, however, stress the potential of education.

‘Many students are the first in their family to attend school and, as such, can have a significant impact on the future development. Almost 50% of FATA’s population is under 15, leading to an increased demand for education. If the parents are convinced about the usefulness of education and skill

development, their children will go to school. The teachers are not only instrumental in educating students and building their character, but also influence through the students the attitude of the parents.' (FATA SDP, 2006: 16)

The hope in the report is that these new pupils will reduce the figures for illiteracy which it also gives (FATA SDP, 2006:13).

Table 6.2: Adult literacy rates by gender in FATA, NWFP, Pakistan and South Asia

	Female %	*Male %*	*Total %*
FATA	3	29	16
NWFP	21	53	37
Pakistan	*40	65	53
South Asia			60

Sources: Bureau of Educational Statistics,
Federal Census (1998); NEAS (2005); World Bank (2004)

In theory this problem is to be addressed through a large number of schools (see table 3 below).

Table 6.3: Number of schools in FATA by type, level and gender average number of students per school (2005)

Number of Schools				*Avg. No. of Students per School*
Level	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	
Primary	1,282	2,016	3,298	80
Mosque	0	212	212	
Community	463	354	817	
IHCs	44	0	44	
Middle	122	280	402	169
Secondary	26	207	233	404
Higher Secondary only	3	8	11	66
College	11	22	33	

Source: Bureau of Statistics, NWFP, 2005

According to the report these schools have enabled FATA to enrol half a million students in primary through secondary education, an increase of just over 200,000 in the 5 years from 2001-2006. Even this increase, however, meant that only 46 per cent of the children were enrolled in primary education. Moreover the report also warned against taking these figures at face value. Many of the schools included in statistical returns are not actually functional for a variety of reasons.

The report (FATA SDP 2006: 14) notes that:

> 'One recent *Dawn* article on the 2006 national census, reported over 12,737 ghost schools .. and another reported in the Daily *Mashriq* of October 9, 2006 that almost no government schools are functioning in South Waziristan, by findings available through unannounced visits by the Political Agent. Many of the schools are being used for other purposes, including businesses, and in some cases, teachers hired others to stand in for them, paying them a small fee. Other than 2 girls' schools in Wana, no female teachers attended school, but continued to collect their salaries.

The report also found that there was little accountability in the whole education system. Teacher and head teacher absences were high, and instructional time was often less than specified in regulations. Seniority-based promotions undermined an emphasis on high-quality teaching and learning. School monitoring was 'infrequent' and financial and resource management was 'neither transparent and rational, nor efficient'. Families, particularly poor families, had little say in their children's education.

According to the report the system as a whole had too little management. Despite a 45% increase in the number of students there had been no increase in the 81 managerial personnel since 1973. This shortage of staff may have been one factor in the lack of interest management showed in the supervision of schools. In these tribal leaders had more influence over school location and use. This resulted in a high number of small schools scattered across FATA, with large imbalances in student enrolment. This had made supervision, support and maintenance more difficult and undercut potential economies of scale as well as increasing inaccessibility.

An activist and vice president of a village-based society in FR Bannu told us:

> 'There is a dire need for educational institutions. The quality of education in the existing schools is poor. Teachers are either not there or are not qualified and trained so people take out their children from schools.'

The FATA SDP report (2006) agreed with him that teaching in government schools was uninspiring. Teachers were reading from a book and eliciting choral responses. Pupils were not taught to think, analyze or solve problems and schooling failed to provide mental engagement or self expression. Few teachers were trained to teach otherwise. Few spoke English well enough to teach in it according to the new policy. Corporal punishment was common. All these facts contributed to low enrolment and high drop out rates. Nevertheless, all consultations held by the SDP team in FATA reflected a high demand for education, including for girls.

Females and Education

According to the FATA SDP report (2006) primary girls' enrolment is still half that of boys (32% vs.61%), and declines to only 7% at the secondary level. Hindrances to girls' enrolment included early marriage, poverty (which resulted in boys getting priority for schooling), cultural taboos and tribal enmities that contributed to insecure travel.

The low enrolment rate for girls also reflects the number of schools for them. The availability of a separate school for girls is a significant factor that influences girls' enrolments. There are 793 fewer primary schools for girls and 88% fewer secondary schools. There are only 11 higher secondary schools throughout all of FATA, and only three are for girls, a particularly serious problem given that completion of higher secondary is required for primary teachers. Shortage of female teachers is in fact a further restricting factor. According to the SDP report about 25% of the teachers in FATA are female. The proportion at secondary level is particularly low at 10 per cent. .

Girls are not only less likely to enrol. They are also more likely to drop out of school. According to the SDP report the primary dropout rate is high - over half of all children in FATA who began *Kachi* level drop out before completing grade 5 (2004-05). Dropout rates for girls were considerably higher, 70% vs. 43% for boys. Rates varied considerably across FATA, with dropouts being highest for girls in North Waziristan (87%), and lowest for boys in Bannu – less than 1%. The report (FATA SDP, 2006:15) comments that:

> Reasons cited frequently for high dropout rates are poor quality teaching, teacher absences, inconvenient location of schools and student beating. High student-teacher ratios at larger schools in main towns also may be a factor. Classrooms in one higher secondary school for girls had 100+ students in each class, often with no desks and students sitting on the floor. In addition, girls are removed by their parents for issues of safety, boys removed due to

> the need for labour, and the risk of becoming overqualified for most jobs available in the area and dissatisfied with the jobs that are available. Educated girls also may risk having fewer marriage prospects, although consultations show that this view is changing in some areas, where educated girls are increasingly viewed as better wives and mothers.

There may be additional reasons for the drop-out of girls. Only 50% of girls' schools have water – an important factor in school attendance, particularly for girls - and there is a lack of secure means of transport. More generally the system as a whole may not be geared to the needs of girls. Only three of the 81 staff in the education department are female. According to the FATA SDP report (2006) report scholarships are distributed through political agents and some female students reported not receiving them even though their brothers did.

In line with these opinions most of the respondents complained of the poor status of education especially for girls in FATA. So they commented on

> 'A dire need for educational institutions, the quality of education in the existing schools is poor, teachers are either not there or are not qualified and trained so people take out their children from schools.'

> 'High drop out rate at primary level for girls because there are no middle and high schools and the girls are not allowed to go far away due to fear of honour, insecurity and early marriages.'

Conclusion

FATA is almost certainly poorer, more insecure and more underdeveloped than any other area of Pakistan. The reasons are many and include its geopolitical position, history and culture. They are reflected in poor social indicators in all areas of development including health, education, water and sanitation, and the economy.

Within this context women face the handicap of a patriarchy that has deep roots in tribal customs and traditions. They face restrictions on their movement, poverty, low self esteem and confidence, illiteracy and lack of ownership and decision making. These handicaps further limit their access to the already scanty government provisions of all social services. As a result they are further isolated and suffer more.

Those wishing to change this situation must confront a fragile security and safety situation, tribal conflicts, the growing power of the Taliban, an out dated and corrupt political and administrative system, and a lack of political will to invest in development. The tribal people are increasingly divided between a small group of powerful elites and a large population of extremely poor people, among whom women are the poorest. This scenario does not present a very bright picture for changing the status quo.

Given these difficulties, the belief behind this research is that female education has a great potential to help not only by building the confidence, skills and economic development of women at a personal and societal level but also by changing the discriminatory tribal culture.

A second assumption behind the research is that the long history of government failure in FATA suggests that other routes to development should be tried. One such route could be the emergence of a vibrant civil society including NGOs. The FATA SDP report (2006) has acknowledged a potential role for NGOs in FATA for demonstrating an alternate model of development. This would involve organizing and engaging the ordinary tribal people including women in their own

developmental schemes.

In later chapters I will discuss how Khwendo Kor attempted to undertake these tasks and how far it was able to achieve success.

Chapter 7
Initial Thoughts: the Role for an NGO

Introduction

The draft I submitted for my M.A. was based on a survey of the literature, much of it quoted earlier, and interviews with 'expert witnesses'. It was evident from both the literature and the interviews that the factors impeding female education in FATA are similar to those in other developing countries. However, the geopolitical status of FATA, its physical isolation, its poverty, lawlessness, lack of state institutions, and centuries-old tribal culture give these factors a particular edge.

These interviewees agreed with the literature review on the urgent need for female education, but also drew attention to factors which they thought would make its introduction difficult in FATA. They then made suggestions as to how these problems could be overcome and what this might mean for a woman's NGO.

This thesis is based on an attempt to test and modify these suggestions through a programme of action research. At this point it is useful to give my thinking at the end of 2002 and the reasons for it. This can then be compared with what actually happened and with my final conclusions. In this chapter I consider the main questions I had to tackle at the end of my M.A.

- Is there a place for a women's NGO in the tribal areas?
- What difficulties is such an NGO likely to face?
- How should these be addressed?
- What principles should underlie the overall approach?

Is there a place for a women's NGO in the tribal areas?

FATA is mountainous and isolated. It has a particular constitution, history and tribal culture. In general it lacks civil society in the form of universities, trade unions, political parties or NGOs. So there is a question of whether these NGOs are needed.

One reason for thinking that NGOs are needed is that other institutions are not fully able to meet the needs. As seen earlier state institutions have been criticised for concentrating on control and not serving the needs of ordinary people. At least 60 per cent of ordinary tribal women, children and men live below the poverty line (ADB, 2003). The miseries of tribal people are enormous and beyond the capacity of any one agency. Attempts to meet need have largely worked through traditional patriarchal structures and systems of *malik*s, political agents and *jirga*s whose main concern has been with keeping law and order.

This traditional approach is not based on the concepts of participation and people oriented development suggested in the last chapter. It does not include the female, poor, unrepresented and marginalized segments of the tribal societies. Their needs cannot be addressed with a single sector approach, such as an educational programme. Rather they need a holistic and cyclic approach – one that works at various levels and with different packages. For example there is a need for work at a village level work on the practical needs of the communities, at a government department level to bring the officials closer to the communities and at a policy level to change these in favour of neglected people and particularly women. NGOs are known for mobilizing communities and interacting at all levels stated above.

This situation has created a huge vacuum for the NGOs to fill. They need to facilitate tribal communities both women and men to mobilise, organize and channel their energy and strength in order to develop their own social capital around developmental programs.

That this is so is clear from the increasing number of NGOs, which are already working in FATA. According to the ADB report (2005) there are several NGOs working in FATA without directly involving the political administration. In some cases the administration is not even aware of their existence. They work in close collaboration with the local tribal elders. Some groups are initiated by the local educated tribal people themselves such as the Tribal Union of Journalists in South Waziristan.

What Difficulties is such an NGO likely to face?

Despite the above, the phenomenon of NGOs in FATA is new. There is a lack of information about them. For example the Assistant Political Agent in his interview denied the existence of NGOs in FATA with the exception of the religious groups which according to him were active in the area.

In addition their credibility, capacity and acceptance is low among the ordinary tribal communities (ADB, 2003). There is a widespread distrust of what is widely seen as a western innovation. Another interviewee, a tribal from the Orakzai Agency and a government official working in the Governor's Secretariat for FATA in the local government department, said:

> 'Tribal people are very allergic to NGOs; they have many misconceptions about them; for example, they think these people [favour] family planning which is against Islam.'

This mistrust has exacerbated the security issues prevailing in FATA thus increasing the risk for NGOs. An NGO worker working in FR Bannu said:

> 'Our office is in the cantonment area and the huge ground you can see opposite to the road of our office was a polo ground in the British times now converted into a military base. Every day and night one can see helicopters bringing down injured military people or their dead bodies from the

> Waziristan in FATA where military operations against the so called terrorists are going on. These tribal people have blood relations everywhere; if one cousin lives in the plains. Others might be still in the hills up there fighting. Even if not directly fighting they have sympathies with their own people, and they are upset and angry also. This makes things very complicated and risky for NGOs.'

The link between politics and the threat to NGOs was emphasised by other interviewees. A number talked about misconceptions such as that NGOs working with western money were working for western interests. A president of a radical religious political alliance, asking for anonymity, emphasized:

> 'First of all the NGOs must clarify their position, people have great misconceptions about NGOs; the moment they hear that NGO people are moving around they think they have got money from the foreigners for spreading vulgarity and un-Islamic secular ideas and are creating distance between them and their local religious leaders.'

The ambiguous legal status of NGOs was also pointed out to be a difficulty. The NGOs have to work harder for the legitimacy of their work. One interviewee working for the anti-mines campaign NGO in FATA said:

> 'There are no laws for registering an NGO or any other society in FATA; the ones which are working there are registered in the other cities of Pakistan and have acquired a sort of informal legitimacy from the authorities based on their individual understanding and good relations, and also by their good reputation of work with communities; without this understanding and relationships with *maliks*, the administration NGOs can't function, once their tribal system is understood and relationships are developed with right people then its easier to work in FATA because then one knows which area belongs to which *malik.*'

These difficulties are particularly severe for an NGO such as mine. Khwendo Kor is a woman's organisation; it is largely funded by western donors; it seeks to

promote the well-being of women in an area dominated by patriarchal traditions which are supported by a harsh and anti-western interpretation of Islam; it aims to work with communities without colluding with the agendas of any of those with power whether these be the religious political parties, the government or the secret agencies; at the same time it needs the acceptance of these parties and agencies since without this it could not operate in a harsh and lawless terrain.

How should these Difficulties be addressed?

One aim of my M.A. work was to see if there were ways for NGOs to function in FATA. In order to do this I interviewed people from diverse backgrounds from FATA. A professor from a tribal background gave me a key piece of advice. In his view it was vitally important to understand the culture and the context in depth and to do so before trying to gain access to women in order to aid their development. People who were intending to work in FATA would need to do a lot of soul searching and unlearning. They needed to develop a real respect for the tribal people and accept them, their attitudes and behaviour as they were. To do this they must first change their own attitudes and be very careful about how they expressed their own views about the treatment of women in the context of a culture where many of these views would not be accepted.

The essence of this advice seemed to be that the work would require patience and that workers should be meticulous in observing those local customs and traditions that they did not explicitly need to change. The tribal man from the Orakzai Agency said:

> 'The NGO people, especially the women should be modestly dressed like village women and spend a lot of time with them, otherwise they would not achieve their cooperation.'

Against this background the interviewees gave a lot of more specific advice about the nature of any education programme that was introduced and the ways an NGO might set about introducing it.

The Curriculum

The interviewees felt that an education programme would be more acceptable if it kept the familiar government curriculum. Our respondents thought that any changes would be viewed with suspicion, especially if an NGO were involved in their introduction. The tribal NGO worker said,

> *'*Here I think one should be careful because any kind of change is going to be viewed with suspicion. Since most of the population is illiterate, they will never initially understand the reason for any kind of change. And they may be exploited by vested interests,…such as by making false accusations that the new contents contain liberal matter which is going to spoil our girls and so on.*'*

It was thought that provided government guidelines were followed, it might be possible to introduce some changes specifically relevant to females in FATA. A 23-year-old female working for a national NGO emphasised that any changes should not be drastic:

> *'*We should be moderate in our approach, for example we should have texts with pictures of young boys and girls playing together. Women should not be always shown working at home but should be shown as doctors, engineers and other professionals*'*.

The 18 year old tribal student agreed that a positive portrayal of females would be helpful.

> ‘I think maybe especially for tribal people some chapters, say in the compulsory subjects such as Urdu, should be introduced in which issues relating to education for girls are discussed. Images of educated girls and women should be positively portrayed.’

Pushtu as the medium of instruction for a few subjects at primary level was also mentioned.

> ‘However one suggestion that I have is that two subjects, Pakistan Studies and Islamiat, may be taught in Pashtu instead of Urdu. This will help the students as they will be taught in their mother language’ (NGO worker from FATA).

Life Skills

It was suggested that women’s education should have meaning for their life. In addition to basic reading, writing and numeracy, some functional life skills which could help in enhancing their income were suggested.

The Assistant Political Agent serving in FATA said:

> ‘In addition to the Government’s curriculum, women should be trained in the field of handicrafts and other such self-sustaining activities in order to create an element of incentive and visible pay back to the women and people of the area. The women have to learn such skills so that along with enlightenment through education, they can become self-sufficient in a monetary way too. There are a number of NGOs in NWFP who buy such handicrafts and provide women a platform to display their skills.’

Better communication skills were thought crucial to enable tribal women to change their position. The female associate professor said:

'First of all, basic skills of communication and maths should be taught to the women of the Tribal Areas. Communication skills are important for learning the basics of letter or application writing and reading newspapers. This is of utmost importance. The medium of instruction can be both Urdu and English, and initially (if required), Pushtu. Knowledge of mathematics is essential for basic calculations at least.'

Health education was mentioned by a tribal woman interviewee with educated daughters.

'Education concerning basic health and hygiene issues.…is important because most people in our area are not aware of basic facts relating to health. 99 % of women think that a glucose drip is the medication for and solution of all kinds of illnesses. In fact, they proudly announce that they have received treatment via a drip through the local, illiterate doctor's assistant. Also, hygiene and cleanliness is not given much importance. So, these are important things which should be part of the education programme.'

Reformed Religious Education

As we know from both the literature on Pakistan and the interviews there is dissatisfaction about the existing religious education. A religious education leading to better comprehension of the Quran was suggested.

'They should be taught about the real, true spirit and injunctions of our religion, Islam. ….. One can never ever undermine the importance and blessings of learning the Holy Quran by heart. But, along with that, they should be able to read the translation of the Holy Book and should know the meaning too.' (The tribal mother of educated and working daughters).

'I think that Islamic education should be included too. Girls should be taught about *Nimaz* [prayers], the Holy Quran and the true spirit of purdah. Teaching

> them these things would also create trust of the Education Programme in their minds.' (the non-tribal mother with a daughter of school-age not going to school).'

A tribal man with a PhD said: 'Religious education should be included so that the positive support of villagers can be won.'

Location

The proper location is vital for the success of any educational programme for girls. The interviewees repeatedly mentioned the acute scarcity of teachers and educated potential teachers without whom education is not possible. This makes the security issues very serious for any external agency such as an NGO. 'Security for female instructors and the support of local *maliks* is important,' said the PhD.

Only a location which is culturally acceptable and physically accessible to girls, mothers and NGO personnel will be successful on a sustainable basis. Schools built in *maliks' hujras* are not culturally acceptable. It is therefore important to find a place where *maliks* are educated and ready to cooperate genuinely.

> 'The 'educated' *malik*s can play a very important role in this regard because they have the role of proving to be excellent intermediaries between the uneducated *malik*s and any such agency which wants to initiate any such education program. They are much less rigid and so can help in such efforts to a great extent.' (52 year old professor from the Tribal Area)

Our interviewees told us that the cooperation of the right *malik*s would ensure the future of female education. They also repeatedly emphasised that, because FATA is a diverse and scattered area, secure locations and government involvement were essential.

Financial Help

The literature suggested that poverty was a hurdle especially for girls. The professor suggested, 'Books must be provided for free to girls. All this will lessen the burden on parents and so they will not hesitate in sending their girls to school.' A female representing a donor had another suggestion. 'There should be a scholarship scheme for children (70% girls, 30% boys). Young 5th Class children should be identified who have the potential to go through education and on to gaining teaching and medical qualifications'.

It was also suggested that provision of jobs for locals as teachers and NGO staff would help ease financial problems.

Involvement of Important Institutions

It was thought important to obtain support from influential organizations. Both governmental and traditional institutions were mentioned.

Political Administration

The involvement of the political administration was thought necessary not only for security issues but also because 'the political administration has tremendous influence on the overall tribal structure of the area.' (Professor serving in tribal area) 'To introduce a sustainable female education programme in the Tribal Areas, the elders of the respective areas along with the local administration *must* be taken into confidence,' said the APA serving in FATA. The male tribal NGO worker agreed: 'The role of political administration will be crucial for giving support in terms of law and order.'

Government Education Department for FATA

Involvement of the government education department responsible for FATA was thought crucial not only for technical aspects of education but also for eventually sustaining it. 'Well the Government Education Department should be involved in the implementation phase, for example where the curriculum has to be devised or teachers need to be inducted,' said the 25 year old female working for a national research NGO. The non tribal associate professor pointed out that to work in any part of Pakistan, government support and approvals in the forms of No Objection Certificates (N.O.Cs) are considered a pre-requisite.

NGOs

The advice for external NGOs was to intervene in FATA with the utmost care. 'So, an NGO with a religious kind of outlook, which has Government support and that of local *malik*s can do this work in the Tribal Areas,' said the tribal male PhD.

Despite this caution, a broad role for NGOs was also outlined. 'An NGO will address the issues of social mobilization, community participation and awareness raising,' said a male worker from a women's NGO. Moreover a number of respondents praised the work of NGOs.

> 'The private sector or NGOs are best suited for such a job because the government and *maliki* system collude to serve their own vested interests and thus the education programmes to date have failed to deliver,' said the NGO worker in the Tribal Area.

A mother said:

> 'I think some private organization should take up this project. The Government shouldn't be involved in it at all. Private companies and organizations are best for such activities. They can do it better because they

are very responsible. Their staff is accountable to the higher ups and they work with sincerity. Since they do such works on their own will, they work with dedication, hard work and honesty*'*.

The female tribal woman with working daughters said, *'*My husband is from Karak [adjacent to the tribal areas]. There are some NGOs working there, especially on education issues, and many of their employees are women. I think they are doing a fine job.*'*

Religious-political parties

Some interviewees suggested that religious-political parties should be avoided for their rigid views, vested political interests and opposition to NGOs. However we were also provided with practical advice by the professor serving in FATA:

> *'*In North and South Waziristan as far as I know there is a well known religious political party which has often shown its nuisance value by opposing girls' education on religious grounds. Now it is also a well known fact that if these clergymen are paid some money their opposition to such an educational programme can be neutralized. They will then not speak against the introduction of any such girls' education programme. They are often bribed by the political administration.*'*

Interestingly the interview with the *maullana* confirmed this. He suggested: *'*Before starting the work some arrangement has to be made with the *malik* and *maullana*, for example some cash awards. Then the programme will be successful. Some monthly stipend should be started for the imam.*'* He thought that it was important to involve them in the processes of female education in FATA.

Hujra

Hujra is the traditional name for a central place in a village which is owned by a *malik* and can be approached by all men, the powerful and the ordinary, and is used for communal matters related to his area of jurisdiction. The place consists of sitting and retiring facilities according to the means of the *malik* who owns it. However, women are not supposed to enter a *hujra*. Interviewees suggested that these could be very useful in the initiation of negotiations and discussions about the female educational programme in FATA. According to the tribal male NGO worker:

> *'*Our experience tells us that the village *hujra*s can play a pivotal role for launching and sustaining any such programme. A *hujra* belongs to a *malik* of a collection of 20 to 25 households where these people come together and discuss issues and try to find solutions and the required course of action is decided upon. You may also call them committees, *'*

The Media

We know that because the media shows males and female together it was not appreciated by the elders, but the 32 year old tribal NGO worker had a different view:

> *'*Media can play an important role in increasing awareness in this regard. We can see today the aids awareness programme succeeding mainly because of the media involvement. Thus a comprehensive awareness programme can be launched involving all stakeholders in order to pave the way for initiating any such educational project*'*.

Involvement of Individuals

In addition to cooperation with these institutions interviewees thought that the involvement of various groups of individuals would be important.

Maliks / Elders

Almost all interviewees suggested the involvement of elders and *maliks*, especially the educated ones, mainly to gain their support for entry to the area and to provide security. The 52 year old professor serving in FATA identified an important role that *maliks* can play in the proposed female education programme in FATA:

> 'The role of educated *maliks* is very important. As I said the educated people, *maliks* will have to first of all create the necessary space for the government or any intending NGO to come forward and start practical work in the concerned areas. Now obviously these very people will have to keep themselves in continuous touch with the project as they will have to deal with any contingency encountered as a result of implementing the program'

'No entry should be made into the area without the consent and support of the elders [*maliks*] of the area' said the APA. The tribal PhD confirmed this, 'The *maliks* should be taken into confidence.'

Professionals Belonging to and Serving in FATA

The professor who was himself working in FATA emphasised the contribution which could be made by educated local people in government service.

> 'In my view the currently working as well as retired and educated government servants in tribal areas especially of lower cadres who are predominantly local people can play a very important role in this regard. There are many local people who are working in hospitals, Communication & Works Department, schools, boys' colleges. I mean they can be mobilized initially in some way because they know directly how important education has been to themselves and secondly they already have liberal views developed regarding female education.'

People Retired to FATA from Abroad

Because of lack of developmental infrastructure in FATA many men of earning age have to find work abroad. Such people are thought to be more aware of the importance of female education. Therefore their support would be very helpful.

> 'There is a large number of expatriates that have returned nowadays from the Middle Eastern countries. They have developed a positive viewpoint towards education. They can also play a role in this regard to help create awareness amongst people. All the above mentioned groups of people can gather and perform a *maraca* [the conventional tribal rally of consultation]' said the professor serving in FATA.

Female Professionals Serving in FATA

The same respondent had practical advice on involving women professionals

> 'I would suggest that for a women's NGO in a tribal area it would be better to first contact the female hospitals, primary schools (if any) where they will find lady doctors, nurses, the head mistress who will provide the NGO women with information regarding the already educated families of the area. These in turn will get into contact with their men and thus some headway can be made.'

Mothers/Parents

The interviewees were quite clear that timely involvement of women is crucial for effective girls' education in FATA. 'The involvement of women, especially mothers, elder women and any local professional women should take place as

quickly as the local situation allows through the men,' said a donor. The APA agreed:

> 'The support of the parents and elders would have to be kept in mind. I feel that even if a single generation of parents is appropriately convinced of the importance of education, the coming ones will follow suit and send their children to schools. It is a matter of changing and affecting a mind-set.'

Besides the above list, the ordinary villagers, donors students unions, philanthropists and politicians were also mentioned as potentially important stakeholders.

What principles should underlie the overall approach?

The interviewees helped us to devise pertinent principles for a programme in FATA. These include working both from the top down and from the bottom up. An intervention in FATA cannot take the risk of excluding stakeholders at any level. It must involve not only people at policy level, such as the government education department and administration, but also the direct recipients, the girls, fathers and mothers at village level. It also needs to be extremely sensitive to the crucial role played at intermediary level by the *malik*s. Without their involvement even the government cannot function.

The interviewees also pointed out that FATA is not homogeneous. An NGO must look for the most appropriate places in terms of geography, resources and people if it is to develop trust. During the initial stage of the proposed programme, it must ensure that most of the positive factors exist. By working with these it will pave the way for long term sustainable female education in FATA.

In the next chapter we shall draw conclusions from the overall research by critically analysing the results from the literature and interviews.

Role of NGOs

NGOs are uncommon in FATA, and are suspect there. The case for involving them is not that they have been working successfully in FATA but rather that there seems to be no other alternative. The government has been working in the area for a long time but not doing a good job. Communities lack the necessary human and other resources. As the young tribal student said, 'Every one wants the situation to change but no one is ready to come forward.' The MA study did not show that NGOs had been successfully filling this gap but rather that there was a gap which they might plausibly fill.

In proposing a role for NGOs it was not suggested that they operate without collaborating with other key stakeholders - the community, donors, influential local people and the government. Instead it was suggested that they could act as initiators and go-betweens among these groups adopting working both from the top down and from the bottom up. That is, on one hand they would need to work in collaboration with the government, operating within its educational policies, gaining its support, and utilising its resources, infrastructure and technical assistance in teachers' selection, training and supervision. On the other hand they would have to involve the communities by initiating the negotiation processes, and facilitating coordination between the government and the communities.

In thinking through the role of the NGO it is important to distinguish between the different stages of developing a sustainable education programme.

Sustainable projects are likely to involve three stages:

- Successful initiation
- Acceptance of change
- Continuation, expansion

The key role proposed for NGOs was in *initiation.* At this point donors' support would be crucial, even though donor funding was not without problems and strings. Moreover the role of initiator would obviously require sensitivity to the particular context of FATA. The Government, its political administration and the educated *malik*s as genuine leaders should be very much kept on board in order to build trust and a successful start. As the tribal male working for an NGO said:

> 'The initial stage is very crucial. Afterwards even if there are troubles encountered they can be dealt with easily through the contacts made with the local community, government, *malik*s, mullahs and parents of students themselves.'

For *acceptance of change* the participation of parents, students and teachers, good quality teaching and a better school environment would be necessary. The NGO-government partnership would remain important for continuous community mobilisation and organisation, quality assurance in the form of training, supervision, provision of school supplies and security issues. For acceptance by the people it was repeatedly suggested that the programme be according to the needs of the people, especially the women and girls. Local people should be put in jobs and the government curriculum and a better religious education be provided.

For *continuation and expansion*, the government education department, by including the programme in its annual developmental plans, was seen as the most appropriate mechanism. In addition, through parents' participation it was hoped that the program would also better cater for the need for higher education. The NGO could continue working with the community towards gender equality through training especially for mothers and women.

The principles followed in this intervention could build on the suggestions made by respondents in this study. The basic premise was that female education had to be built with the support of local people and - in the long run at least - involve the use of the government education system. The involvement of local people in developing education is the key to the ideas of educational theorists such as Freire who

believed that literacy had to arise out of people's own interests. It is also repeatedly emphasised by the respondents in this study. It is only the government that has the resources to develop education throughout FATA. The basic difficulty of introducing female education is that many influential local people do not want it and the government has shown no great desire to support it.

The value of the pilot study was that it suggested ways in which this problem might be tackled. The essential insight it supplied was that FATA is not as culturally homogeneous as the sparse literature suggests. The respondents in this small study had different attitudes - the 18 year old tribal student spoke of the need to educate his sister with a passion which older respondents did not show for educating their daughters. They also pointed out that there were educated people in FATA whose help could be enlisted, that *malik*s were not uniformly hostile to education, that not all areas in FATA were equally unsafe, that the education of females was not against Islam, and that there were benefits in female education which might appeal to local people.

These findings suggested that female education might be presented in a way which could appeal to local people, that whereas some areas might be hostile to it others might not, and that the task of the NGO might be to pioneer the introduction of female education in a way that fitted local culture and in locations where local people would be relatively willing to accept it. The principles suggested below followed from these considerations.

Intervention at Community level

According to the pilot study it was important to adopt a strategy that went with the grain of local culture. No drastic change would be acceptable and successful. It was near to impossible to intervene in FATA without the involvement of *malik*s who were among the strongest impeding factors. However not all *malik*s were hostile. It was therefore necessary to involve *maliks* who were educated and relatively progressive. According to the interviews they could play an important role in taking forward the agenda for female education.

Provide Incentives

Both the literature and the interviews suggested that poverty was a major factor impeding the development of female education and that this was further held back by the quality of the education provided. In order to achieve girls', mothers' and teachers' participation it would be necessary to provide free education which was also seen as worth having. This meant providing free books, a better school environment and facilities such as toilets, drinking water, and mats for sitting, and better salaries and training for teachers.

Do not Offend the Religious

The culture in FATA is Islamic and conservative. My MA draft argued that it would be important to have a modest appearance which conformed to that required by the local culture and to express respect and understanding for local traditions. According to the interviews it was particularly important not to challenge the status quo directly. The inclusion of religious education would facilitate building trust and better understanding as well as an interpretation of religion favouring females.

Provide Jobs and Training for the Locals

The practice of recruiting and training local people both male and female for jobs required by the programme would have various advantages. It would build support for the programme and contribute to poverty reduction, the retention of skilled people in FATA and sustainability. It might also be necessary to provide functional education to women and mothers to enhance their skills and enable them to take part in income generating activities.

Select Proper Locations

An area which was central, accessible and has basic facilities and some females with the level of education required for potential teachers would ensure a good start.

Need for Action Research: Recommendations

My M.A work concluded with a recommendation for an action research programme. This would include:

- Identification with the help of key informants such as tribal professionals of a few appropriate locations.
- Visits to the political administration and FATA education department in the areas identified to introduce the programme, verify the appropriateness of the location and obtain support and advice.
- Visits to *hujra*s as many times and in as many villages as possible in the identified area to develop rapport and confidence and collect information.
- Meetings with males and discussions with *malik*s to introduce the proposed programme in these locations.
- Collection of information, with the involvement of *malik*s and local people such as parents, on the preparedness of the people for girls' education, number of school-age girls not going to school, the curriculum with reference to the inclusion of the proposed religious education, the various options for school venues, the availability of educated teachers.
- Meetings, held with the consent and support of *malik*s and fathers, with mothers and women separately to discuss the appropriate venues and school hours according to the availability of girls and to seek agreement on the conditions for mothers' and girls' participation in education.
- Exploration of the arrangements for an appropriate management setup for the programme.
- The identification of potential donors interested in female education in FATA.

- Sharing of information with the government education department on a regular basis.
- Identification of potential teachers and community organisers.
- The identification of accessible training facilities, both governmental and non governmental, and resource persons such as local government teachers for training purposes.
- The clarification of roles and responsibilities among the various stake holders at village, education department and NGO levels for the proposed programme.

I argued that these steps were necessary to develop a five year pilot educational programme on a participatory basis with the *malik*s, fathers, mothers, representatives from the education department and political administration and donors. Gathering the information necessary to develop this programme and carrying out the negotiations necessary to bring it about would provide a practical but also academic insight into the nature of government and culture in FATA which has so far been missing from the literature on the area.

The next part of this thesis provides an account of my attempts to implement this programme.

Overall Conclusion

At the end of 2002 I concluded that the work of a women's NGO would be difficult in FATA, but nevertheless not impossible. As I argued then, FATA is not a homogeneous area. It is changing and some areas are more aware than others of the importance of girls' education. Lack of government interest over the years has left a vacuum and NGOs may be the only option to fill this. Provided the local political administration, the government education department of FATA and educated local leaders are involved; appropriate locations which are easily accessible to girls and their mothers are selected; there is adherence to the local culture and local people are fully involved; and the proposed education programme is affordable, there is

potential for the successful launch of a female educational programme by an NGO in a few areas of FATA.

Chapter 8
The Action Research: Getting Started

Introduction

The feasibility study gave a number of warnings. However it also ended on a positive note, suggesting that an NGO might be able to explore and initiate work for female education and development in a few tribal areas provided extreme care was taken. Before coming back to Pakistan I transferred my MA to an MPhil so that I could test this hypothesis and the principles drawn from the study.

I returned to Pakistan in October 2002 and rejoined the NGO Khwendo Kor Women and Children Development Program in Peshawar. It took me some time to move from my student's role to assuming the management position of Chief Executive in the organization again. From that time on, however, I have combined both roles.

As Chief Executive I have carried overall responsibility for what happened. As a student I have tried to learn from this. The main objective of the action research has been to learn lessons both from failures and successes. I therefore set out to document what happened and analyze this in order to draw improved principles for application in similar situations elsewhere. This chapter is about the beginning of the project. It is dedicated to narrating the movement from the MA study, through discussions, speculations and a lot of consultations to the start of work in the villages.

The principles of this movement were derived from MA.

First, in order to reach women and children in FATA I had to take account of a number of diverse groups with vested interests in FATA and enough power to be detrimental to the plan. These included stakeholders such as:

- The FATA political administration at agency level
- The government line departments for FATA
- The extremist religious political groups
- The *malik*s
- The ordinary men and of course the elderly women, and mothers –in- law
- The potential donors
- The security agencies personnel (the FIA, CIA, ISI and IB etc); each has its own agenda but both individually and collectively they have to accept your presence in FATA if you are to work there.

Second, without sufficient understanding of and information about the tribal culture and policy framework within which these stakeholders function in, no-one can make a successful intervention in FATA.

Third, it was essential to work with the men, women and children in the target communities in such a way that they not only agreed to the project but also owned the initiatives and decisions take and eventually came to sustain them mainly through their own efforts.

Fourth, I had to consider the widespread security problems.

Fifth, it was important to maintain the integrity needed for this kind of work by adhering to the values of honesty, transparency, and, most critically, non-partisan ship.

These principles governed the way we started work at the village level..

Who Will Do the Job?

The first question I needed to address was 'Who will go to the villages and implement the project in FATA?' From the very beginning I had the NGO Khwendo Kor (KK) in my mind. There were several reasons for this:

1) KK had experience of working directly with the grassroots Pashtun communities, both women and men, in the NWFP villages adjacent to FATA.
2) As the founder and senior executive I had confidence I could influence the organization to undertake the project.
3) The involvement of a few staff members in the feasibility study as interviewees and interviewers had created some interest in FATA among the senior staff.
4) KK's previous work had gained it a certain level of credibility among some the important stakeholders. These included the international donors who had become interested in development work in FATA after the events of 9/11.
5) FATA fulfilled most of KK's criteria for selecting a working area. It was rural, poor, had a low female literacy rate, poor health conditions, a lack of basic utilities and sources of income, and few developmental projects.
6) As a tribal woman, I thought I could be a good link to the tribal people in at least one tribal area and help to muster their support.

On my return I had found that time was needed to revive the team and look at the structural aspects of the organization. During this initial period the idea of starting work in FATA remained high on my mind but my discussions on the topic remained very casual, brief and ad-hoc. As someone recently returned from the UK, I was afraid that talking too much about my research might lead to people rejecting the idea or not fully owning it. I did not want this idea of action research to be seen as only mine, and thought more time was needed to make it part of the organisation's agenda. For this reason I did not push for it too much. Nevertheless, in a low profile manner, I continued working towards my main aim.

Initial explorations

I shared my anxieties with several friends interested in FATA, such as Dr Mumtaz Bangash whose work I quoted extensively in the feasibility study. I shared with him a copy of the study as well. Also I met Selab Mehsud, a renowned tribal journalist from the Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan and exchanged views with him. I was always worried I might arouse hostility. My informal conversations with relatives and other people were always designed to explore what they felt about the possibilities of a female education and developmental project in FATA rather than to give them details of something that was already decided.

I felt it was important that the initial reactions of the people I was meeting were not coloured by the popular perceptions of FATA and that their responses were positive. Therefore, I would always tend to personalise the general issues in FATA to gain their support. So I would talk roughly as follows:

> 'We educated, city based and better off tribal people do not deserve the privileges that we have, we don't want the same for our relatives back in our village, we are not doing anything substantial because our cousins sisters and brothers are getting worse, poverty in FATA is very bad, there are so many people especially children dying from preventable diseases, mothers dying in child birth, poor families and men who are responsible for providing the livelihood are so very helpless, you can see it on their faces, they don't have resources and employment, most of the families are in debt, the situation is very bad, the young boys and men are roaming around astray, no jobs, and they indulge in criminal activities which are easy to get involved in. The tribal families living in Peshawar Islamabad and in other big cities do feel superior, as if we are from a different planet, when the desperately needy come all the way from village asking for help.'

In reply I would get reactions such as:

> ‘What else can we do? We give them *zakat*, help them in finding jobs and look after them in hospitals and police stations. We ourselves are not billionaires’

or,

> ‘They them selves are responsible. We are here because we worked hard; they don’t find time from killing each other. How can they be better off?’

I would not bring any controversial agenda such as that of female development into the conversation. After engaging in this sort of discussion for a while and getting some agreement that things were bad, I would suggest a solution by saying,

> ‘Can something, maybe very small, be done by our NGO? You know our work. What do you think?’

Usually looking straight into my eyes to judge if I was serious, they would reply along the following lines:

> ‘Oh yes but you know this is or that is the problem, but yes, why not, money can make things happen. We know NGOs have a lot of money from America and England (laughingly). Why not, you can do it, but be careful with this NGO thing, it is a dangerous label. Still it can be done. But don’t say you are an NGO, say you are from a government department because people are used to working with government. Good or bad they know it, they don’t know NGOs. If you can’t even do that, then at least get the government’s permission and say you have the government’s permission. I know such and such a political agent or officer. In such and such an area, there shouldn’t be any problem, others are also working there. Please consider my brother for a job, he will be a great help.’

Talking with Close Family

My communication on the subject with family members - sisters, brothers-in-law, brothers and sisters-in-law and my mother - would always be casual and in a family atmosphere. However my conversations with different family members had varying objectives. For example, with my mother an illiterate housewife and coming from a poor tribal family from FR Bannu I would mostly discuss tribal customs and traditions to deepen my understanding of things from her perspective.

The objectives of discussing the matter with one of my brothers, a senior government official at that time, were more complex. What was his security point of view? How would he as a tribal man perceive his sister, working for an NGO, entering his own village? Would he approve such an initiative? There was a danger involved in asking him these questions. If he said no it could be a final decision. He said:

> 'Why are you insisting on FATA, especially your own village? There are plenty of other poor areas. Why can't you continue doing what you have been doing so far? You are looking for trouble for all of us. Do you realise that you are creating direct security and honour issues for us? You should at least wait for a while. When things improve then you can go there.'

I took this response with great relief. He did not tell me outright not to do it. If he had, it would have become literally impossible to go at least to our own village if not to the other areas in FATA. About his genuine concerns I thought we would definitely take measures in line with the feasibility study guidelines.

Interestingly, although almost all of my female family members are educated housewives and one sister is a doctor in Peshawar, I assumed that getting assurances from men who enjoy power was more important. This was partly because I did not expect active resistance from my female relations. In this I was not entirely correct. One of my sisters is usually not interested in what I do, but she

visits our village more frequently than any of us due to her husband's business in Bannu. She frequently made remarks like the following:

> 'I hope your faith remains intact. People say to me your sister is too close to foreigners but I tell them she says her prayers and all these are rumours. She would be too poor if she didn't do a job. When she didn't work, it was too much of a worry for all of us. These foreigners are good people. I have been meeting quite a few of them and they are really good. They are not interested in changing our religion'

My Work with the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

During the same period I was offered an assignment by the ADB. I became part of a consultancy team initiated by the government of Pakistan and supported by the ADB. The consultancy involved preparation of a development project for FATA. My contribution was in relation to identifying and highlighting the gender issues in FATA. I worked part time on this project for seven months during which I remained involved with KK.

This assignment allowed me to meet various people related directly to FATA. For example, I had several opportunities to interact with senior officials at the Governor's Secretariat for FATA in Peshawar and the government line departments and political administration at the agency headquarters level in the three FATA agencies of Bajaur, Khyber and Mohmand.

My discussions with government department officials remained informal. In order to get their maximum attention I would start with topics that were likely to interest them, such as politics, government policies and systems for FATA. Occasionally when I felt I could, I did ask difficult questions related to gender issues.

The ADB assignment provided excellent opportunities to visit different villages in the above three agencies. I had discussions with several tribal women in their villages about the problems they faced and how these could be resolved.

Discussions in Khwendo Kor

In the last months of 2002 and the beginning of 2003 I had several meetings with key people, especially with Aneela Qamar, the Director of Programs for KK. Special workshops were held involving as many people as possible from the organization to deliberate and share their ideas.

On many occasions I would leave the meeting room to allow free discussion and open sharing of fears and reservations. I assumed that I, as a tribal woman, could be seen as having a vested interest in taking the organization to FATA. I thought the case for involving the organization in FATA was anyhow very strong and I did not wish to be used as a scapegoat for not going there. Therefore, I wanted the organization to come to that conclusion by itself.

This time was difficult because KK needed support to take a critical decision. I would not have to go to the villages on a regular basis, this would be done by the field staff. I would be seen as safer than others. Staff would frequently ask questions about who would support them and who would go to the villages. These were very genuine and difficult questions for me. However, events in FATA were increasingly discussed and the more staff knew about the area the more comfortable they felt.

My Son's Marriage

During this period my son's marriage took place. I thought this was an excellent opportunity to invite KK staff, both female and male, to the marriage feast in our village. First they would see the area very informally as guests in a relaxed environment, they would meet many people from the area with whom they could exchange views, they would see the poverty and general deprivation themselves and would see how people dealt with the security issues.

This proved to be the case. For quite some time after the wedding, there were discussions in KK about how poor people were, how many died from the tribal rivalries, how poor was the health of women and children and so on. In addition some good contacts were made.

The SWOT Exercise

One important activity undertaken by KK staff at this time involved a SWOT analysis, looking at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of intervening in FATA. This was facilitated by the Director of Programs and all important staff actively participated in the exercise. For most of the time I was deliberately be absent. The following were the recommendations from the participants:

1. In principle KK should go to certain secure areas in FATA.
2. KK should look for donors immediately and the senior management should do this on a priority basis.
3. Before going to FATA to start female schools and other activities KK should collect more data, and undertake a more detailed research for this purpose.
4. The research should not be limited to only one area in FATA.
5. After the research, KK should select potentially viable villages for intervention.
6. If needed KK might capitalize on my personal links in FATA.
7. After the identification of interested donors KK would submit proposals to them
8. KK would make necessary arrangements for FATA in its management structure for when things became clear.

Support from Action Aid

At an official meeting in Islamabad I met Dr Fouzia Saeed, a leader of the radical feminist movement in Pakistan. She had recently taken over the position of Country Director of Action Aid (AA) office in Pakistan. She casually asked me about my MA study in the UK and I shared that we were looking for donors.

Without asking any other questions, she said they would support us, always provided gender equality and empowerment of women were at the heart of the project. She told me to write to her about where we wished to work because Action Aid would have to have an appraisal of the prospective area and could finance that right away. At this time the only area where KK had some information and contacts was my own area of FR Bannu, so everybody in KK very quickly agreed to start from there.

After this things started moving fast. Action Aid hired a very experienced consultant to lead AA staff members in appraising the potential area of FR Bannu.

Personal Visits

Meanwhile, I visited the neighboring villages of my mother and father, and a few others nearby. I encouraged a few young male educated relatives to accompany me. I wanted to find out what they thought of our plan and if they showed any interest in the work. I found them extremely interested in learning things such as how to collect village data using various formats, make sketches of the villages, and hold discussions with people we met.

I found people very hospitable and welcoming. However, during these preliminary visits, people's reactions to the idea of KK working in the area were very mixed. In some villages people said it was not a problem. KK could come provided the *maliks* did not object, and there would be some solid benefits for them in the form of jobs and cash. I was time and again reminded that female education alone would not work.

In other villages the people were totally under the influence of the Taliban and there was clear resistance to my ideas. Almost everyone was affected by the security situation. I was shown houses which had been demolished by the Pakistan military because their inhabitants had been accused of providing shelter to some Al-Qaeda people. I asked why they did that. An elderly man explained:

> 'It was after mid night, it was very dark and two men knocked at our door. They asked for food and shelter. In our tribal custom, even if your enemy asks for shelter, you have to provide it at any cost. So we allowed them to spend that night with us. We can't say for certain but they seemed to be Arabs but spoke to us in our language. Before dawn, according to our custom we escorted them to a safe passage. But soon the military invaded our village with heavy armor. Our men were already warned by a nearby friendly clan so they had disappeared but our houses were demolished. Families were made homeless overnight.
>
> We don't know who these two men were. We are not going to forget this for generations to come and we hate all these developmental programs because we hate the government and their kind, the white Americans and so called development.'

Despite these reservations the people offered us food, had open discussions with us and, asked questions about our program and funding sources. I replied honestly to all these questions. They remained respectful all the time we were with them and advised us to be very careful due to the fragile security situation.

I had several discussions with my first cousin, a *malik* himself with substantial influence in our area. He had understood our plans and agreed to help us. I introduced the senior KK team members to him and they regularly asked his advice. He organized an important gathering for KK and the Action Aid area appraisal team in Bannu to which he had invited important tribal *malik*s.

Selection of Tribal Areas in FATA

Our next task was to select areas in which to work. This decision was guided by the initial experiences in FR Bannu, my ADB consultancy work, and the experience of KK staff in areas adjacent to FATA. The basic decision was that we should work in only two tribal areas and should not attempt to reach the whole of FATA which is geographically widely spread and diverse.

Only those tribal areas would be selected which fulfilled the KK criteria for area selection, i.e., general underdevelopment, poor education, health and economic opportunities, severe gender disparities and poor governance. However, any part of FATA satisfies these criteria. Therefore, they needed to be narrowed further. It was decided that to suit KK's capacity the areas;

- Should be adjacent to the existing KK working regions in the NWFP thus lessening the management task.
- Should be where KK have some contacts or links suggesting potential for the kind of work KK does.
- Should be where the security risks are not very severe
- Should be where villages are relatively easily accessible.

There was consensus in the organization to select the Khyber Agency in FATA as the second target area as it fell within the radius of 20 km around Peshawar where KK has its head office.

Institutional Arrangements

At the head office of KK in Peshawar, work continued on writing proposals and correspondence with donors, organizing their visits to KK's office and field work, and looking for researchers to undertake the agreed study on FATA.

Some finance had been made available by Action Aid for the FR Bannu area appraisal, so the end of 2003 was spent setting up a regional office in the city of Bannu, which is around 120 miles from Peshawar and adjacent to the FR Bannu area. An experienced area manager from the adjacent KK working district of Karak had been transferred to look after the new area of FR Bannu. He adhered strictly to KK 's values of transparency, accountability and honesty, and this was thought to be crucial in a sensitive and dangerous situation.

In accordance with the principles drawn from my MA we attempted to find educated females from FATA to work in their own area. We did not succeed. However, eventually one of my young educated relations was allowed by her parents to work with us on my personal assurance of her safety. Two educated Wazir young men one of them my relations from FR Bannu also joined us.

KK Research on FATA

My MA study had suggested that more information about FATA be acquired. We have seen that KK itself reached the same conclusion. In addition, I thought that by undertaking such research KK staff would get actively involved in FATA. By 2004 the Canadian International Development Agency had (CIDA) approved and released funds in line with a proposal submitted by KK for undertaking this. The main objective of this research was to collect detailed and in depth information about the whole of FATA in relation to female education and development.

KK found it extremely difficult to design and plan the research work. It was nearly impossible to find a female researcher with the necessary experience. Therefore quite some time was taken in looking for a researcher. Eventually a male researcher was appointed. I supervised him and he completed the assignment by the end of 2005.

Secondary data were gathered for all seven agencies and six Frontier Regions of FATA. For the primary data the researcher and his team went to the villages that the KK regional team had recently selected. Since the Khyber Agency had been

selected later, fewer villages were included from there. At this time village profiles were developed.

Achieving Maximum Possible Participation

Meanwhile, the new manager of the RF Bannu office became heavily involved not only in the day to day management of this new KK region but also in networking with all important government FATA departments. He also identified and engaged activists from FR Bannu and extensively visited other civil society organizations there. He was simultaneously trying very hard to grasp the tribal culture of the Wazirs, the main tribe in his area of work.

The establishment of the regional office in Bannu, the search for and hiring of local staff, the meetings with numerous people and visits to other NGOs and GOs, spread the news that a women's NGO (KK) was intending to work in FATA. This news caught the attention of all kinds of people including inquisitive tribal men who would come to Bannu for their own business and would also visit the office. They would get information and quite often this would lead to the identification of and visits to potential villages.

Visiting Villages

Any contact might lead to a visit to a village. The person could be an ordinary laborer or a tribal *malik* or a government officer, showing interest in KK's work. He would play a role of a key informant about his area. He would make contact with the influential people in his village, explain about KK's work and arrange for an initial meeting between KK staff and *malik s* from a prospective village. The initial meetings would be organized either in the KK office or at a *malik*'s *hujra* in the village.

These initial meetings were usually crucial for deciding about selecting a village. Only 20 out of the 60 visited were finally selected. At these meetings there was usually excitement, sometimes hostility, and usually a weighing of each other's credentials and some bargaining about trade offs. There was always a sense of tension on the part of KK staff, who at that time were new to the area and its people.

Conclusion

In the light of my MA study, I began preparation for the action research. I had discussions with friends, relatives and direct family members, secured funds from donors and ensured that KK fully understood the FATA context and owned the decision to work there. Two areas were selected from FATA and institutional arrangements were made for working there. Visits were made to many potential villages. Meetings were also held with important people in FATA, such as the

officials from political administration and government line departments, *maliks* and activists from the selected areas.

As a result of my work with the ADB and the research undertaken by KK, we learned that FATA was not homogenous. In some villages people were very welcoming and receptive to the idea of female education and development, whereas in others there was strong resistance to it. Spaces for such projects existed. However, we also realized that female education alone would not be sufficient, without tangible benefits such as jobs for the local people. We were also warned that security issues were more serious than we had expected. The next chapter narrates how village people, both male and female, were involved and the kind of villages we selected.

Chapter 9

The PRA Exercise: How we involved the villages and what we found

Introduction

This chapter will show how and why villages were selected, how village people, especially women, were involved and what approaches were used to do this. Three overlapping influences guided these processes: the formal criteria that guide KK's work on schools, the willingness of local people to be involved, and the needs encountered. The chapter will describe each of these in turn.

In discussing needs the chapter analyzed the data from some of the villages where KK used participatory methods. The main source of this data is the report done for KK as a result of the research I supervised. This covered 20 villages (including two small towns) where KK started work at the beginning of the project.

As the work progressed KK had to move out of some villages for reasons which will be described in chapter 10. New villages were found to replace them. Examples are also taken from PRA exercises from these villages but any figures (for example 6 out of 20) apply to the original 20 villages.

KK Criteria for Founding a School

Based upon its thirteen years of experience KK has developed criteria for working to open a primary school.

- No primary school within the village or within 1 ½km radius distance of it
- Or existing school is over-burdened.
- And/or high girls' drop-out rate from boys' schools before completing primary.

- Community is ready for participation especially mothers.
- Adequate numbers (30-40) of school- age (5-12 years) girls
- Community willingness for monetary and in-kind contribution.
- Availability of local and/or non-local female teacher with middle or matric qualification whether or not she is trained.

The criteria for helping to open a middle school are:

- Availability of 3 to 4 primary schools in surrounding area.
- Availability of 80 to 100 primary pass girls
- Contribution of community in terms of venue, *chowkidar* (guard) etc
- Community willingness for monetary and in-kind contribution.
- Availability of 3 local or non-local teachers with either a BA or CT/PTC qualification

The criteria for opening an adult and functional literacy class are:

- General community support for the project
- Community willingness to make a monetary and in kind contribution
- The availability of 15-20 women of above 18 years who can take part
- The availability of local eighth grade pass teacher

Even where not all these criteria are met, KK will sometimes consider initiating educational project. For example, even if there is a government school in the village but it is not functioning properly or is far from the community, the village may still be considered. If KK is satisfied that enough of its criteria have been met staff go to the village to begin work. The demand and willingness of people in general and mothers in particular are the most important prerequisites for KK to begin work. The first steps were to establish that all concerned wanted to work together.

Establishing Agreement to Work

In the initial stages of work in FATA, KK's main strength was the ability of its staff at all levels to create a positive environment for two-way communication, diluting the tension that normally exists between strangers. The staff did not make tall promises or claim to be able to change things they could not. KK's principles were discussed so that both sides understood what was possible.

After the first meeting as described in the previous chapter the village people would take several days to decide among themselves if they wanted KK, a women's organization to move to their village. In this way, the initiative would be moved from KK to the hands of village people. The next visits usually happened if interest was shown by them through phone calls, visits to the office and messages.

If this stage was reached a big gathering of all segments of the community would be organized to share awareness about KK's work. Female KK field staff would have a separate meeting indoors with village women who came with their men's permission. In these public gatherings activists would come forward to take responsibility for various activities. Important people from the communities were involved and shown respect to achieve their commitment for supporting KK publicly.

At this point, if both sides wish to continue the decision was made to include the village in the action research. As mentioned in the previous chapter, out of 60 villages that were visited only 20 were selected. After the big gathering, the activists were given tasks to complete before the PRA. These included consultation with village people to identify venues and dates for the different PRA exercises with both women and men in the village and to note the names of possible participants, it was then that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and the Action Aid (AA) area appraisal and child profiling took place.

Participatory Rural Appraisal

Effective PRA exercises need experience and skill. At the start of village based work in 2003/4 KK acquired the services of consultants to help staff in the use of these tools.

The main PRA tools found useful by the KK field workers were semi-structured interviewing, focus group discussions, mapping, and the use of Venn diagrams and Matrix in order to generate discussion and achieving the maximum participation of the people, and in particular the women. The exercises were intended to help the groups of ordinary village men and women to identify their needs and set priorities for their village collectively. Men's and women's groups were then formed. These built consensus on selection of a place for girls' education and put together village development plans

The more we were able to talk indirectly about the difficulties of women and girls the easier it became to communicate and get insight into the situation. The PRA exercises and help to make sensitive gender issues less personal, detaching the women from their own emotionally sensitive problems and enabling them to talk about issues which were culturally difficult to discuss.

Need: the Findings from the PRA

Five of our 20 villages were described as in the plain or cultivated land. The remainder were in land described as mountainous, hilly, barren, dry, uneven, or, in one case, water logged. In size they varied in estimated population from 234 to 25875. Nine had less than two thousand inhabitants. Eight had between two thousand and nine thousand. And there were two towns of approximately 11,000 and 26,000 inhabitants.

Large households with extended families were the norm with an estimated average of 21 per extended household. In contrast to the official figures there were rather more women than men (102 women for every 100 men). Those described as children also made up a sizeable proportion of the population (48%).

All the villages were reasonably accessible. None were more than 28 kilometres from the nearest town. All were reached by roads although only 7 of these were metallic. The remainder were only suitable for foot traffic and carts.

Resources were not evenly spread. Thirteen villages had some access to electricity. All but two had a telephone in the village. All but one had TV and radio. In five there was at least one person with a satellite phone. These facilities, however, were the preserve of the few. In 16 of the villages fewer than a quarter of the villagers were thought to have access to a phone and in 17 fewer than a quarter had access to TV. In only one village did more than a quarter of the villagers have access to electricity.

Women's Working Day

By and large the women were not among those who enjoyed these modern resources. Instead they experienced poverty and a grinding routine. The following extract is from a PRA exercise narrating their daily activities and was put together collectively by the village women from Sardikhel in FR Bannu.

> 'The information that we collected from the female participants is that they wake up before call for *Azan* {call for prayers from mosque between 3 to 4 am in summer} and then they collect milk from their cows or buffalos. Around 5-5.30 in the morning they prepare breakfast. At 5.40 am they perform their morning prayers. At 6 am they prepare buttermilk from the yogurt, at around 7 am they knead flour, and till 8.30 am they clean and

> scavenge. Then they collect water. At 9 am they prepare lunch, at 9.30 am they take their lunch and then they go to the field for work. From 1pm to 3pm they wash laundry and perform their afternoon prayer. At 3.15 pm they prepare afternoon tea and knead flour for dinner, by 4.20 pm they say their *Asar* {noon} prayer. From 4.30 pm to 5 pm they cook their evening meal. At 6pm they perform evening prayer. Round about 6 pm or 6.30 pm they take their evening meal. From 6 pm to 7.30 pm some of the women press their clothes. At 8 pm some visit their parent's house to collect milk from the cows. At 8.30 pm they come back to their home perform their prayer and go to bed at 9 pm.' (Annexure 111 of the KK Progress Report to AA, Oct- Dec 2003)

In my view even this narration does not completely document all the work that village women have to do. It makes no allowance for the unexpected, for example, the work caused by guests whom men may invite to their houses.

Despite their overwork, the women have little say in matters related to their own lives. Very little that involves females can be done without the approval of the village's influential men. Male power is so strong that even the ordinary close male relatives can disrupt agreed ongoing work in a village just because they personally disapprove of it. An example can be taken from the KK progress report to AA, April-June 2005:

> 'During reporting period follow up visits were made to two ALCs [adult literacy centres] at the villages of Sikandar Barat and Kotka Baber…The ALC of Kotka Baber was closed, as the male members of the 12 learners in their families were not allowing them to attend classes there. SOs {social organizers} in a meeting discussed this matter with the members of MOs [men's organizations]. They agreed to send the females to the literacy center and requested [KK] to reopen the center. As a result 6 women were readmitted and the remaining are still not attending the school, which is on priority in the next quarter to improve and decide over ALC…The centers are

provided with course books and educational charts. The teachers are teaching according to the syllabus.'

The Representation of Women

There were no government representatives, members of the national assembly or senators living in the area. However in FATA it is the *malik*s who are the linking points for all important external and internal issues, irrespective of whether these are social, political, or criminal. They keep tribal social cohesion intact. For any work, developmental or otherwise, in the tribal villages the consent of *maliks* is crucial. The presence of a formal *malik* registered with the relevant political administration is considered to be a privilege. Villages without *maliks* have to depend on the *malik s* from the neighboring villages. Out of the 20 villages in the PRA only two did not have their own *malik.* (KK FATA Study, 2005: 183)

No *maliks* are women. More generally KK realized through its work in the villages that reaching females was difficult because they are not organized in the way men are. Traditionally men are trained from childhood to conduct public gatherings in such settings as the *hujras*, the mosques, *jirgas* and shooting contests. When you go to a village you ask for a *malik*'s *hujra* and straightaway you meet men.

Such ease of access is not possible in the case of women. Females do not have any such opportunities or mechanisms. All leadership positions are for men only. A woman cannot be a *malik* or take part in a *jirga*. The PRA results confirmed this. We looked for women in leadership positions and found none.

Economic Deprivation

The reports suggested that most males were working in agriculture, as workers paid on a daily wage. Livestock is one of the main sources of livelihood. Women were also heavily involved in this and sometimes sold butter, milk and *Desi Ghee*

(clarified butter). The government's lack of interest in the economic development is clear from how much it has neglected this primary source of livelihood of the tribal people. Only 3 villages out of 20 have some kind of veterinary provision.

Some men worked in transport or (occasionally) for the government or the army. Many men were said to be working overseas as labourers. Some trades such as carpentry seemed restricted to men. Others such as tailoring were available to women but they lacked the capital to buy sewing machines.

Loans, if available at all, seemed to come from relatives and neighbours. The PRA data showed that FATA lacked credit and loan facilities. A bank existed near only one of the 20 villages. This meant that due to their limited mobility women were denied their access to credit facilities.

The KK study also investigated if credit facilities were offered by any NGO in the area and found there were none. In times of need people, particularly women, sought loans from relatives. If they could not get these, they would borrow from money lenders at very high interest.

In all PRA reports women talked about how they perceived poverty. Among the definitions they gave of wealth were owning a brick house, being able to take patients to the city for treatment, having sufficient weapons and having many sons who would be able to overpower an enemy. Poverty was defined as, among other things, living in someone else's house which was in poor condition, being indebt and being unable to afford hospital treatment.

The PRA reports repeatedly mention the indebtedness of the people in the selected villages. Women shared their worries about this. In one case the young daughters and nieces of a man were taken out from school due to fear that they might be kidnapped to press for the recovery of the money that had been borrowed. The other party then kidnapped their son from the boys' school to recover the money. This became an honor issue. (PRA report on village in FR Bannu)

The men's groups would also come up with a list of priorities, some of which were different from those of the women. These included jobs for young unemployed men, metallic roads, proper supply of electricity, irrigation channels, cementing their streets and pavements and repeal of the FCR. Men also complained that some tribes, which had increased in population and moved near to the settled districts, lacked their due political representation at all levels including at the office of the political agents, provincial and national parliaments and so were denied a share in resources.

Tribal Rivalries

Tribal rivalries and enmities and, as a result, the insecurity of the men and their families were among the most discussed issues. Furthermore, the jealousy, pride and hatred among he families had led to increased domestic violence and fear, further restricting the mobility of females and making a bad environment in the villages. The KK PRA report for another village says:

> 'Every family in the village has its own tower made out of mud on the top of a room to provide security to men because they have tribal enmities… the causes of conflict are mainly: honour issues, recovery of loan, distribution of water in irrigation channels and conflicts over jobs because *maliks* get them according to the quota system for a whole tribe in FATA. (For example the jobs in the *khassadar* force (levy), in schools and BHUs.) The people recruited do not perform their jobs but draw their salaries of which fifty percent under an informal agreement is distributed between the government officials and the *maliks*. This is known to all and other family members expect a share and if the *maliks* do not share some portion of it with cousins then conflicts arise.'

Education

Government educational facilities were available in all except one of the 20 sampled villages. However, we know from the AA area appraisal, KK's study and the census reports, that the female literacy rate in the target areas is extremely low. We looked at what might be the reasons for this discrepancy.

The PRA confirmed the view in the government report mentioned in chapter 6 that schools are opened at the discretion of *maliks* and to serve their own interest rather those of the pupils. Our interviews also suggested that schools are not established in places easily accessible to girls; that some teachers are close relatives of the *maliks* who draw salaries without teaching; and that there is lack of supervision from the education agency officer due to security and other constraints.

Nine of the 20 villages had no government primary schools for girls. Only one had a government middle school for girls and none had a secondary school for girls. In comparison, only one village had no government primary school for boys, seven had a middle school and four had a secondary one. The restrictions on girls' mobility made the inequality of this provision more serious, because they were unable to walk to schools in neighboring villages.

From KK' s interaction with village women and children it became clear that the quality of education in the government schools is much below standard, corporal punishment is pervasive and facilities such as toilets and water are lacking.

KK found a great demand for female Islamic education and also for basic literacy. In the sample villages there were both male and female *madrassas*. However, the number for females was fifty percent less than those for males, showing a lack of concern even for their religious education. Women showed interest in learning reading the Quran and also how to write their own names and read letters. They said they had to deal with things such as reading the labels of medicines which they had

to buy and give to their children and so they had to look for some educated person to explain these to them.

Health

Only six of the 20 villages had basic health units (BHUs) and four dispensaries. Ten had no health facilities. All reported problems related to health. The main ones were the need to go to Bannu for any form of health care, the cost of medicines which were only available on the private market and the fact that the doctor or dispenser did not turn up. Comments were made such as, 'Doctors often do not come to the dispensary and also sell medicine in the bazaar'.

We have seen that the situation of women in relation to education was not good. However, it was even worse in relation to health. Women in the ten villages without; any health facilities were denied the mobility to seek health elsewhere until their condition was desperate. The lack of maternal and child health care caused particular concern.

Everywhere KK went it saw women, children, men and the elderly suffering from basic health problems. Many women in the villages were said to have died in childbirth and child deaths were also reported. In one or two cases family planning services were also demanded.

An example of such problems can be taken from the PRA report for the village Khairaki Mama Khel in FR Bannu, where the village women developed a seasonal chart. The PRA report quoted them as follows:

> 'We tend to have more cases of typhoid and malaria in October and November. The cough, cold and influenza are widespread in late December and January. February to May time is full of complaints of gastro-intestinal

diseases. In June, July and August, jaundice, asthma, eye problems, and skin diseases are much more common. In cold weather every third woman complains of joint pains. Diabetes and blood pressure have nothing to do with the seasons but are difficult to bear because we don't have any government health facility in the village and the road to this village belongs to the families of our cousins. Quite often there are conflicts with them and they block the road and the other road is non-metallic and very deserted. Also on the way there are streams and small rivers which flood during that season. One can't cross these and our patients die on the way to hospital.'

Water

Only three villages were said to have access to drinking water and in one of these a minority (less than a quarter) were said to have access to tap water. Three had access to ponds and a further one had a well. But in each case less than a quarter of the village had access to them. The main sources of water were hand pumps and tube wells. Only one village provided no reports of water shortages. In some of the others lack of money was part of the problem; 'Only rich people have water pumps in their houses…there is a problem of water scarcity', or again; 'People buy water from tankers. There are ponds surrounding the village but the women are suffering from bringing water from these far away ponds'. And there was also the problem that water was short as was equipment. 'There is one government tube well for the whole village but it is not functioning properly. There is a severe scarcity of water.'

KK field staff mentioned that women feared sexual harassment on the way to distant places for bringing water. They did not talk about it to avoid making an honour issue for the family. Even young girls and pregnant women had to spend a lot of their time and energy in bringing water. People live in joint families and women would quarrel if they felt children or any one else misused the water, or over turns for bringing it from far places. Also there were storage and quality problems

As a result of these problems family hygiene suffered. Scarcity leads to less washing, drinking, and other uses of water and to poor health; children especially did not get sufficient baths. The bad quality of the water added to the health problems. There is also competition over the uses of water. An example of women's concerns comes from a PRA report:

> 'In our village there is one narrow water course in the middle of our village but during winter seasons the water stops flowing for three to four months because it is directed from the source to other places and our standing crops suffer dry out. Anyhow, in the last few years the amount of water has decreased…when there are no rains on the mountains all the rivers and streams dry out. We have to bring water even during our pregnancies and many women have abortions. You see how weak the animals are. We don't get it, let alone our animals.' (KK PRA report on village in FR Bannu)

Similarly in the PRA report from another village in FR Bannu, village women said:

> 'We use water from the small water course near our village. It is dirty and mud comes with the water that we use for drinking. Often dead animals are found but we have no other option but to use the same water. We have to go long hours to fetch it, either taking our children along or leaving them back home. In both cases they suffer. We are tired and cannot do other things. Due to dirty water children get sick and we borrow money for their treatment. When we go out, on the way we face harassment and also people gossip, which leads to arguments and these become honour issues. Resolving this needs money which poor people have to borrow and they are further indebted and the mental stresses are beyond our control. Again the treatment needs money and you can see we lack resources.'

Conclusion

The villages were selected with the help of KK's school opening criteria, which included demand and willingness of people in general and mothers' participation in their daughters' educational activities in particular. The initial selected villages varied in estimated population from 234 to 25875. However, some of the villages, including the large ones, were dropped later. All the villages were reasonably accessible and were in a radius of 30 to 50 kilometer from the nearest towns.

The good communication skills of KK's staff at all levels helped in developing rapport with the influential village elders and *maliks*. They not only themselves were cooperative but also allowed the field staff's interaction with the women and men in the selected villages for various purposes including their participation in the PRA exercises. These exercises helped in the active engagement of village women's and men's groups in identifying and prioritizing their own problems and strategies for solutions.

The PRA exercises were undertaken separately both with groups of women and men. The issues such as poverty, water and health were common between them. However, women suffered more, for example, they had to carry heavy pitchers of water from far away places and also faced harassment on their way while bringing it. Due to poor quality and dysfunctional services and their lack of mobility, females were more deprived of education, health and credit within and outside their villages.

KK did not have expertise in the kind of activities demanded by the men's groups such as electricity supply, irrigation channels and repeal of the FCR. It explained this to them. Nevertheless, the organization had to keep the *malik s* and men who enjoyed power on its side and interested in the work it did for female education and development. In the next chapters we will discuss how all this was done.

CHAPTER 10

Difficulties Faced by Khwendo Kor

Introduction

This chapter discusses the difficulties faced by Khwendo Kor in reaching its main target group, the women and children in the selected two FATA areas of FR Bannu and the Khyber Agency. In line with the guiding principles drawn from the preliminary study, KK moved forward very carefully. However, despite all this caution the KK team encountered serious hurdles. Many of these problems stemmed from the changed political situation I found on my return. The chapter describes this situation, the way it was reflected in our initial work, and the continuing challenges we have faced throughout the project.

The Changing Political Situation

When I finished my MA study and arrived back in Pakistan the situation there had changed radically due to the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in September 2001. This had affected the political atmosphere in Pakistan generally and FATA in particular. The 2002 elections had taken place and the coalition of the extremist religious political parties, the MMA (Mutahidda Majlis e Ammal) had taken over the NWFP government. As described by the Qatar-based *Peninsula* (2007), 'The MMA swept the 2002 polls on the slogan of Islamisation and after using the Quran as their election symbol.'

International politics had also taken a different turn and Western money and the present Pakistani government policies were now used against the extremists in the name of the war against terrorism. One consequence of this was that religion and politics had become even more closely connected. The ordinary people in general are religious. It is much easier politically to mobilize the masses around religiously correct agendas and slogans than it would be around social issues such as women's

development. The extremist religious political parties draw most of their followers from the remote, rural, poor and illiterate communities in the areas bordering Afghanistan, who are isolated from mainstream democratic politics.. These radical Islamist parties endorse a tribal interpretation of Islam and portray moderate political views as serving American interests and as un-Islamic.

As outlined in chapter 4 these developments had roots in the past. American, British and Saudi money channeled through the Pakistan military and secret service had funded *mujahadeen*, who had been educated and trained for *Jihad* against the Russians in the *madrassas* in FATA and NWFP. After making enquiries among various informants from FATA I became convinced that success in that war had strengthened the alliance between the Taliban and the local people who also saw the war as justified and holy. The power of the Taliban in FATA was further strengthened by their possession of massive amounts of sophisticated weapons. Their widespread support was based in mosques and *madrassas*, rooted in part in their common ethnic identity with the local Pashtun, and increased by their role in mediating in tribal disputes and ensuring some degree of law and order.

The Taliban were strongly opposed to the Americans. Their resentment stemmed from a feeling of betrayal. The abrupt withdrawal of support following the Russian departure from Afghanistan had led to a loss of income and jobs. They could see no reason why *Jihad*, once promoted by America, should now be seen as a kind of terror. As described in chapter 4 these feelings were only increased by incursions by the Pakistan military into FATA. As will be seen these conclusions were confirmed by my direct experience in the areas where we worked.

I had not thought it necessary to pay attention to the Taliban in my thesis. On my return I found that their power and authority was not limited to the business of fighting. Their influence extended to all areas of life. They exercised religious power through mosques, they could give verdicts on disputes, and they were challenging the power of the *maliks*. They disposed of resources in the form of trucks and guns. They drew their members from the local tribes, in the areas of the study the Wazir and the Afridi, and they exercised their power in accordance with

local institutions and traditions. In this way they filled a gap left by a relatively powerless administration and a system of *maliks* that was often corrupt.

A clear example of their influence as against that of the authorities was provided by my mother's village, Matchi Khel. Here the Taliban have established a small prison for 20 to 30 people. The last time I went there about 35 men were reported to be in this prison: all of them reputedly drug addicts, drug traffickers, gamblers or ordinary criminals.

All this is no secret, every one talks about it. Some praise it. One of them said:

> I am a widow and poor. My son is a drug addict and has sold everything I have been saving for years. He beats me if I resist I was afraid he would one day sell me as well so I requested the Taliban in our village to help me. They came and took him to their prison. They feed him - this was a constant worry for me. They told me that after keeping him away from the drug for 40 days they will send him for a 4 months *tableegh* [religious trip and when he comes back will be a totally reformed a person. I am so relieved. May Allah bless the Taliban in whatever they are trying to achieve.]

Others, however, were less pleased with this system, claiming that their sons had been unjustly imprisoned or harshly beaten. Some women told me of sons or husbands or other male relatives who had been 'brain washed' by the Taliban into joining *jihad* and had been to sent away to fight. They did not know where they had been sent or if they were alive or dead, or whether they would appear on their door steps in the middle of a night or would be brought home in a coffin.

The Taliban exercise their power through the mosques. They can come at anytime and takeover charge of a mosques and make announcements, give warnings and put financial penalties in cases of breach to their instructions. They also combine their attention to the local customs with the threat of force. In my village a *malik* told me that the Taliban called for a *jirga* which many *maliks* attended. They issued certain instructions. One *malik* did not agree with their decisions and stood up and

left the *jirga* proceedings. The Taliban leader said, 'we have not acquired our power by easy means. We sacrifice our lives. Anyone disagreeing with us risks his life as well.'

In other respects the Taliban showed more flexibility. I went to a marriage ceremony in our village and saw women and men dancing. I was very surprised and asked about the Taliban's ban on music and dance. A lady sitting beside me said smilingly 'we will pay the fine. People now include such fines in the marriage costs.' As we will see, the Taliban were also prepared to come to an accommodation with local *malik s* and this was to prove important in KK's work.

Initial Difficulties: Child Profiling and the Taliban

An early introduction to the importance of the religious parties came when one MMA MPA (member of provincial assembly) visited KK Peshawar office in 2003 and held meeting with me and other senior KK colleagues. He asked us to work in his area and as he directed. We said we were a non partisan organization and have nothing to do either with the Pakistan government's policies or any other political party. However, we would like his support along with that of others in our work for women and children in his area. He seemed not very happy with this response.

Against this background, it seemed obvious that KK might easily be targeted by extremists. Like other NGOs it drew funds from the West, it was run by and for women, and it could easily be seen as supporting the government's agenda, the western aim of empowering women or the aims of one of the political parties. This suspicion was quickly confirmed when we began our work.

In accordance with our agreement with Action Aid we began our work by drawing up child profiles for 1,100 children. In the course of this exercise in the *hujra* in Janikhel, around 25 men, identifying themselves as Taliban, arrived with

Kalashnikovs and other weapons and surrounded the KK and Action Aid teams. They asked questions to establish if the team members were good Muslims and had the right beliefs. They basically objected to a women's NGO, using Western money, working in the village but they made a particular point that it was un-Islamic to take photographs of girls for the profiles. They threatened grave consequences if the team did not leave the village immediately.

The *maliks* in whose *hujra* the activities were taking place and who were present took this as a challenge to their honour and immediately rushed for their own weapons. For a time it seemed a clash could not be avoided. However, the KK Regional Manager stood up and said that KK would not work in an area where they were not welcome and would leave immediately. However KK would always be willing to answer any questions about their work from anyone who came to their office in Bannu. If at any time the village felt it was ready for partnership, it should approach KK again. Shortly after this, activities were stopped in two villages whose *maliks* had previously publicly committed support to KK.

Problems with the Taliban spread

These initial problems were localized. KK continued its work in the remaining selected villages with much more fear of facing increased resistance. I myself and the KK FR Bannu team started to receive threats to our lives. My male relatives were told to tell me to stop. *Fatwa*s were issued forbidding people to collaborate with us..

The most serious development occurred soon after the child profiling incident. A big *jirga* was called in the Jani Khel area by the Taliban leadership. Many *maliks* were also invited. The *jirga* was called for the holy day of Friday when many more people go to the mosque. After the Friday prayer sermon various Taliban leaders declared that Khwendo Kor's work was un-Islamic due to females freely moving in the vehicles with non-*mehrum* men (no direct blood relationship such as brother, husband, father or paternal and maternal uncle) and that NGOs were the agents of

the West, especially the US and UK. They claimed that historically in this area and elsewhere they had been converting Muslims to Christianity by providing medicine and health services. They told the people to give money to them and not a women's NGO and said the conspiracy must be stopped before it destroyed the Muslim fabric of society by altering women's roles. Khwendo Kor was asked to leave the area with dignity.

This *jirga* had a devastating effect on KK's work. *Jirgas* are considered the main decision-making bodies in FATA. Their decisions are adhered to in the letter and the spirit. In addition in this case, the *jirga* was basing its decision on the traditional popular and tribal version of the Islamic teachings. Later we were told that the leadership of this campaign had direct links with the radical religious political parties alliance (MMA).

The local Urdu press now started publishing Taliban statements and threats and the religious political leaders' *Fatwa*s against NGOs working in the area. For example, one pamphlet announced a fine of Rs 500,000 on people who were found supporting NGOs. This spread the information even to those areas where our work was still going on fairly well. In addition, pamphlets containing derogatory language were issued and widely distributed. Rumours were spread against KK. For example, it was said that the children whose names were documented would be tracked down by the US and its allies. A landmine was planted in one village where KK had been working and it was announced that more would be planted in any village collaborating with KK.

Immediately this campaign persuaded many *maliks* who were supporting KK to withdraw their support. In some villages the child profiling was stopped. In the KK progress report for July-September 2004, the Community Facilitator for FR Bannu recorded having been told by a village man:

> ‘KK are the agents of foreigners and they are benefiting them. They are taking their agenda of converting people into Christians whose affect will be seen after 25-30 years and this number of people will increase slowly and gradually. After this when they have a strong foundation they will stand for elections and will win and the foreigners will come here and govern our country and us. That is the reason that I want to keep my children away from the school because my children especially girls will learn vulgarity and when they will grow up they will start practicing what they have learned. That is why I hate them very much because they are the enemies of Islam and I do not want them to have any relationship with me and my family because they are *haram* (religiously forbidden).’

The KK security update for Khyber Agency (2004) made a very similar point:

> ‘In 2003 religious leaders propagated in Torkham, which is near to Afghanistan border that Khwendo Kor is spreading vulgarity and obscenity in FATA and wants to bring the culture of west, therefore local people should try to shoot down the KK team. Religious leaders were raising this propaganda in their Friday sermons.’

After this, Khwendo Kor restricted itself to those villages where *maliks* were in control and the Taliban influence was not that strong yet. Nevertheless, almost all mosques in the area started spreading messages against Khwendo Kor’s work. Their loudspeakers would urge people not to cooperate with the NGO.

Mosques are among very few indigenous institutions in the tribal society providing religious education and guidance in all aspects of life. Especially elderly women visit the imams for blessings in day to day matters such as if a child is not recovering from an ailment and if it is considered to be a spell, then an imam is approached for prayers. These elderly women, who enjoy more power then the younger ones, would not allow the KK field staff to do their job smoothly now. They would ask questions such as:

> ‘Why are you not married yet? Which tribe do you belong to? Are their *maliks* sleeping to allow such things? Do you have family? Do you say your prayers? Is your husband/ father/ brother not a man enough to take care of you and feed you at home? What has the driver to do with you? Is he your relative? Who else travels with you? How are you allowed by your family men to do this? What a curse or pity for a woman to be roaming in rain, wind, heat and dusty streets attacked by dogs and strange looks, and sneaking from door to door for a few pennies’

Some Effects of the Pressure

These pressures had a variety of effects on the staff, the support received from the government and the funds received by KK.

The staff’s experiences in the villages would trigger off heated discussions back in the office. New, young female staff who had come from their homes to work out of economic and other pressures would sometimes burst into tears. The shock of being perceived as bad Muslims was hard to bear. This uneasiness would influence the motivation and family relationships of the female staff. Many KK staff left their jobs due to such pressures and the security issues.

Government officials were also affected. It was normal practice to invite them to events such as the opening ceremonies of girls’ schools to show that they were appreciative of what KK was doing. Quite often they would not appear and would leave KK in a very embarrassing position. An extract from the KK Progress Report for July –September 2004 illustrates the excuses that were made:

> ‘Government Officials as Chief Guests did not attend the ceremony at village Gul Badin CBGPS due to security issues in the tribal belt. They were of the

view that KK works in highly sensitive areas where they would not permit their staff especially females to attend the ceremony.'

In practice the government was unwilling to forbid KK to carry on its work in FATA. It did, however, discourage it. KK management had to give a lot of its time to the investigations, interrogations and checking of its records by the various security agencies. In the end this led to good relationships with the security forces. Initially, however, it was not experienced as helpful.

The pressures also indirectly affected the donors. These require reports of targets achieved before they will release funding. We in KK believed we needed time to show the desired results. For example, we were facing difficulties in completing the agreed number of children's profiles and had been unable to continue with our activities in several villages. Around this time KK was in any case under financial pressure. One donor had agreed to provide funds for work in Khyber but did not do for almost a year after the contract had been signed so that it was necessary to borrow money from other projects on a temporary basis.

Further incidents: the Campaign Intensifies

Two further incidents illustrated the gravity of the situation. In line with the guidelines of the feasibility study, KK made maximum efforts to employ staff belonging to the local area. A driver from FR Bannu was hired. He was able to advise KK about safe routes, identify and introduce us to useful people and villages and talk favorably about KK to local people in their own dialect.

However, as almost every tribal family is entangled in some kind of tribal feud he was no exception. In 2004, he was attacked by his family's rival group. In retaliation his close family members attacked back. Meanwhile a mobile police party came and opened fire killing one man and the KK driver was hit on his leg. He resigned, rightly saying that he could be a security threat for the KK staff and had no option but to leave the job he was so happy to get.

At roughly the same time as this attack, a young female worker and her driver were attacked and badly wounded while returning from a school in FR Bannu by three men with covered faces who appeared to be Taliban. The driver was immediately taken to hospital but the woman was left bleeding as it is against the Pashtun culture for a man to touch a female especially if she is young. Eventually her screams attracted a passer by and she was taken to hospital where I visited her and was told by a relative to leave as others were looking for me and had stopped a government vehicle believing I was in it. My family became increasing worried for my safety and about the possibility that my death would involve the family in an issue of honour. I and the staff in KK were becoming increasingly demoralized. I in particular was worried that staff might be killed, that this would be my fault and that the project in FATA would fail.

This was the situation in June 2004. As will be seen in the next chapters, KK responded to these difficulties and achieved some success. It would, however, be wrong to think that the difficulties disappeared. In the final sections of this chapter we look at some of the continual challenges that were apparent in the early stages of the action research and which to some extent still apply.

The Impact of Events

The difficulties of the project varied with political events. Attacks by the US on a *madrassa* in Bajaur, military operations in Waziristan in 2004 and the publication of cartoons in a Danish newspaper all led to attacks on NGOs in general and KK in particular. For example, low and moderate intensity explosives would be placed in the regional offices. These in turn led to difficulty in carrying out the work and thus spending the money that had been allocated.

A KK report to a donor explaining the failure to use this money in FR Bannu commented:

> 'The military operation in South and North Waziristan has negatively affected development work and initiative in general and the organizations with women development agenda suffered the most. There was severe unrest among the people because of insecurity and day to day suicidal attacks, killings and firing of missiles by unknown miscreants in the area. Common people felt insecure in the area. District administration and Government line department itself became helpless and various government departments have faced incidences like kidnapping of staff and vehicle, bomb explosion near offices and routes, murder of Chief Minister's relative, the executive director of an NGO. NGOs staff were threatened with unknown telephone calls and letters to stop work with NGOs. Resultantly in June 2006 all the NGOs closed their offices includes, National Commission for human development (NCHD), Global Development Program (GDP), Community empowerment (CE), Aurat Foundation (AF), CESSD and other small NGOS and community level organizations'

The KK security update for Khyber Agency (2007) noted that in the course of 2006 four bombs were placed in four different centres during the night. None of these caused loss of life but they could easily have done so and one caused serious damage to the building.

Religious Opposition

In the initial stage of its work during 2003 and 2004, as we have seen above, KK workers were attacked repeatedly by the Taliban suspected for not being Muslim. Other attacks on KK were from the mosques. Imams and other religious leaders would use the people gathering for prayers to announce verdicts against KK saying NGOs were involved in un-Islamic activities and urging people to expel their staff from their villages. In response, as we have described, would seek not to put its village hosts, the *maliks* and men into a difficult situation. Instead KK would quietly leave the scene and allow them time to resolve the matter between them.

Many community based schools were closed out of fear of the Taliban. They would warn of grave consequences including financial penalties in case any one disobeyed their instructions. The teachers would pack up the school material such as the blackboard, sitting mats and charts, tell the girls not to come again to the school and then call the KK office refusing to teach in the insecure environment. An example was provided by the community-based girls' primary school at Noor Musa Khel:

> 'The community members advised KK to discontinue developmental activities in their village. The community could not guarantee the security of KK staff. Meetings with MO president were held to analyze the situation. He informed that continuing of developmental activities and connection with NGO is harmful for him and his community.' (KK progress report, 2004)

Even in the early stages, however, the Taliban experienced some resistance. An unusual example of this was provided by a poor woman who was bitten by a scorpion while on a visit to a village where KK staff happened to be.

The Khwendo Kor team took her in a KK vehicle for initial medication in the nearby village basic health unit (BHU). While she was on the way to her home and in great pain about eight men equipped with Kalashnikovs suddenly appeared and stopped the vehicle. They forced the driver to testify at gunpoint that the NGO passengers were Muslim and accompanied their interrogation with abusive words and threats. A male local supporter of KK who was also accompanying the woman in the vehicle started to negotiate with them without effect.

At this point the woman who had been bitten intervened. She asked them if their own daughter was suffering with such problem and someone helped her then what would be their reaction. In the end the men let them go with a warning to avoid movement in this area in future as they were not allowing NGOs in their areas.

After this incident, these Taliban came again to the village and warned the people of the consequences if they were found to be involved with NGOs. As a result the

villagers advised KK and Action Aid to leave the village until and unless the problem with the Taliban was settled.

Difficulties with *maliks*

Though KK was facing tremendous pressures, it was amazing to see the dozens of tribal people including *maliks* visiting the KK office. People had high expectations from KK because of the perception that NGOs had a lot of western money. They asked for support over health and water issues. Girls' education would also be mentioned but not as the top priority. These demands and expectations added to the pressure on KK. At the same time they led to particular difficulties with the *maliks.*

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As we have seen, KK had involved *maliks* in its activities at all stages of its interventions. However, this had not been easy. KK found that *maliks* would usually ask for personal favours such as jobs, monetary incentives, and the upper hand in decision making. The following provides an example:

> In the village Ash Khel in Khyber Agency, the acting *malik* agreed to support a girls' school and one of his female relatives was appointed as a teacher. However, later he insisted that his brother be employed as KK field supervisor and asked for a rise in the salary of the female teacher beyond KK rules. He avoided the collective community meetings and insisted on his demands. Though the other members agreed to have a second teacher from outside the village, he said he would not be able to take responsibility for her security. The Programme Director insisted that KK could not go beyond certain limits and eventually the school had to be shifted to a nearby village.

Similarly, in FR Bannu a *malik* allowed the traditional birth attendants' training on condition that it was only for his wife and a few close female relatives. This *malik* was influential outside his village as well and KK needed his blessing to work in the area. Therefore KK agreed to provide the TBA training to only three women. This then resulted in his wife getting paid employment in a government Basic Health

Unit in his village. However, after achieving his personal objective, this *malik* became disinterested in KK and did not support them against the Taliban.

In 2004 the KK Regional Manager for FATA in Bannu made an assessment of the motives of ten *maliks* with whom he was working closely. Only one was not seen as interested in jobs for his family although some of the others were at least in part concerned for the welfare of the village. For example the reason for supporting KK was in one case given as:

> '[He wants] to maintain his *Malikism* in the village and his personal interest. He is less interested in overall development. He severally demanded for infrastructure like drinking water supply scheme, and prevention of soil erosion by floods. Education is the top need of the area but the community is unaware of this need and basic right. He is interested for support staff employment with KK for his relative and friends.'

One motive in this case was seen as the *malik*'s need to maintain his own power. In a few cases, the *maliks*, realizing that others were getting into the decision making, would interrupt the PRA process in their villages, saying it was a waste of time.

Such abuses of power were not unfortunately confined to *maliks*. Another example was provided by the president of a community based organisation who was forcing one of the KK supported community based girls school's teacher to pay him a share of her salary. She did that for a few months in response to the authority and responsibility KK had delegated to him for looking after the school. KK's desire to empower the community had led it to delegate as much authority and responsibility to the local leaders as possible for managing their village projects. She seeing his power thought she might lose her job if she complained against him.

Lawlessness and Security Problems

The lawlessness encountered in the course of this project has been illustrated above. It was much worse than we had expected. Before starting the project we were under the impression that *maliks* were in total control and by getting their support and by keeping the local political administration informed of our movements in the area, the security of the village women and the village based staff such as teachers, would be fairly secured. As we have seen, however, this was not the case and to some extent still is not the case. In the last two weeks while writing this thesis I have been distracted by the rocketing of the neighbourhood housing KK offices in Bannu and by the need to negotiate for the life of a driver kidnapped and taken to the tribal areas who was fortunately released yesterday.

Conclusion

In line with the preliminary study KK expected to encounter problems of lawlessness, and opposition from religious leaders and *maliks*. What had not been expected was that changes in the international and national political scenario had led to shifting of power and resources from conventional structures to the Taliban who had gained influence in all spheres of life. They exerted their authority through traditional institutions of mosques and *jirgas* and by providing relief to people by dispensing disputes among warring tribes and rehabilitation of drug addicts.

The Taliban used their power against those who might disagree with their views. KK did not expect this resistance and faced severe difficulties. *Jirgas* were called and mosques and local media were engaged in propaganda against the work of KK which was projected as un-Islamic. The military operations in Waziristan and elsewhere exacerbated the situation. KK was repeatedly under attacks by the extremists. Explosives were planted in its offices and its vehicles were attacked. As a result, some government functionaries and *maliks* who had otherwise been very co-operative withdrew their support from KK, many of its female staff left the

organization and it had to stop its work in many villages and several schools were closed.

Despite these difficulties, KK continued its work in the villages where it could and continuously received demands from other villages to work with them. In the next chapter we will see how KK handled these difficulties were and the kind of strategies it evolved for doing so.

Chapter 11

Reacting to Extraordinary Events

Introduction

The preceding chapters have mentioned the many difficulties that face those involved with development projects for women and children in FATA. However, the last chapter discussed a number of difficulties whose severity had not been foreseen and which if not handled properly could have been fatal for the organization.

The present chapter looks at how KK has been managing these risky situations, achieving its goal of working with village women. So far it has not only survived but also gained support from the Taliban, the strongest opponents of the women's development and NGOs. In order to do this KK needed to work strategically, review its own policies and ways of working, and engage women in the villages themselves. The chapter will describe its work at each of these three levels.

The data for the chapter come from KK progress reports, the results of the PRA tools used by KK field staff for own work, internal verbal and documented reports from the staff, and my own observations. The KK Regional Manager for FR Bannu also responded very helpfully to a series of written questions which I put to him on the issues covered in this chapter.

Response to the Attack of June 2004

The previous chapter described the June 2004 attack which seriously injured a driver and a female member of staff. Shortly after this the organization reviewed its work in FATA. A number of questions arose. Should KK leave the area? Should the incident be publicized? Should the case be registered with police? Should the organization make a big fuss about it or carry on as usual, and what else could be done?

Almost all relevant staff and local activists were involved in the discussions and the organization took the following decisions:

1. Not to stop its work
2. To exert pressure at different levels so that it was clear to those who had been wounded and to those thinking of making such attacks that events of this kind would result in a serious response in the future
3. To register the case with the Bannu police (as expected nothing substantial came out of that due to lack of interest on the part of the provincial government)
4. To make a serious protest about the incident in collaboration with other NGOs in Peshawar at provincial level.

Protests were held and processions were taken to the provincial parliament and a meeting was held with the Chief Minister NWFP. In this meeting the same MPA was also present who had come to the KK office in Peshawar. He complained to the Chief Minister about KK saying that he had told us to cooperate with him. In response the brother of the injured driver who had accompanied us in the procession and was present in that meeting stood up and shouted at him, saying that MPA knew about the attack and that if the driver had died the MPA would have been responsible for this death.

The Pakistan NGO Federation (PNF) also issued statements in Lahore. The case was widely publicized in the national and local newspapers, which put a lot of pressure on the provincial government.

At local level the field staff continued its work as usual. KK, however, continued to develop its responses to the threats to its work in FATA. Moreover, a fundamental strategic development took place through the formation of the Khwendo Kor Area Coordination Committee (KACC). These developments are described below.

Khwendo Kor's Responses

KK's responses to the threats were based on two key ideas. First, it was possible to work in some parts of FATA. There was therefore for the moment no need to work in areas that were unsafe or where the work could not go forward. Second, the attacks on KK by religious leaders and others were in part based on a misunderstanding of what KK was doing.

KK set about the task of identifying safe and accessible villages where the people were ready and the conditions were right for its work. It did this by:

- Seeking more information on the identity of those leading the campaigns and in this way opening a dialogue with them either directly or through *maliks* who were reportedly close to the local Taliban and religious leaders. In this way it was possible to identify areas where it might be possible for KK to work without arousing powerful opposition
- Continuing to work with the support of *maliks* and activists in the few villages where it could, but also entertaining *maliks* and potential activists from new villages both in FR Bannu, the district Bannu and in Khyber Agency area. As a result it was possible to select new villages which were geographically accessible and where successful interventions were possible.
- Keeping communications open with the *maliks* from the villages where KK was prevented from working. KK would keep them informed of its progress in other villages, would invite them to functions and would get feed back about their

progress of negotiation with the Taliban and religious leaders in their own villages.

- Providing mobiles for its drivers and regular security updates thus seeking to enhance their safety in the areas where KK was working

KK also sought to change the perceptions of its work and thereby to widen and diversify the basis of its support. It did this by:

- Looking for sympathetic journalists, engaging them in its work by organizing their field visits to the working villages for various functions such as the medical camp and school opening ceremonies. Reports on these events started appearing in the local print media
- Organizing functions within a religious framework and publicizing these in the local media with help of friendly journalists.
- Inviting the mosques and imams to participate in its regional office based activities such as seminars, and school opening ceremonies.

> '60 Religious leaders participated in advocacy workshop on child rights and actively taking interest in child related advocacy based activities which related to children education and their rights.' (KK Progress Report on Khyber Agency to Comic Relief for Jan –March 2007)

KK also got across its message in other ways. For example, we hired jobless and very poor but skilled tribal people such as drivers both at the head office and regional offices belonging from the area. When they would go home on leave or holidays they would be thoroughly interrogated by the Taliban about KK's work to see if it involved anything un-Islamic. One of the drivers in the beginning refused to tell them that he was with working for KK. Coming from the same environment, he was not sure if the organization was 'right' from Islamic point of view. His father was not happy about his joining KK. As he explained 'our whole family is in debt, we have left our village and migrated to new village due to enmity, so I accepted the job I was looking for a long time.'

Later when he went home they questioned him again, saying that they had come to know about his work for KK. He said, 'Yes, but I think they are better Muslims than most of us, my mother fell ill and everybody helped me in Peshawar, people are saying their prayers, I requested them to open a female *madrassa* in our village where my qualified sister could become a teacher and they have agreed to do that saying Urdu, Maths and English would also be taught in that *madrassa.* I think they are serving humanity. Look how many people are drawing their livelihood from the organization'. According to him his mother is full of praise for KK when the village women come to ask about her health.

KK also strove to keep alive its contacts with the government and its donors. For this reason it kept all important government agencies including the ones responsible for security and political administration fully informed of its work and movements at times even on daily basis. Usually KK staff would visit these offices along with the village activists, the *maliks* and the quite often the donors as well. All this helped to assure the officials of the support available to the organization and had a great impact upon them.

Finally KK took full account of the local culture and Islamic traditions and advice from those *maliks* and activists and journalists who had stood by the organization in difficult times. It did not do anything that would provide an excuse for an attack or would create problems for the village people who cooperated with it. For example, KK did not register the bomb attacks on its premises in the Khyber agency with the local administration. This was partly on the advice of local activists, who told us that the political authorities would probably arrest the fathers, brothers and uncles of the girls going to our schools. This would be legal under FCR and would be intended to bring pressure on those arrested to identify the culprits.

More recently KK has made a formal agreement in one area with the Taliban, the local people, and the government. The record of this agreement is given as Annex 1. It covered such things as arrangements for security, the dress to be worn by KK female staff, and permission by the government to the local villages to provide protection to KK staff when traveling outside the village area. In this way KK has

been able to pursue its core mission of providing education and development within the villages while seeking to ensure that it did not give needless offence to the different parties whose help it needed.

Khwendo Kor Area Coordination Committee (KACC)

The KACC was designed to strengthen KK by providing an increased sense of ownership of KK activities for the local people who provided its membership and advice on the decisions KK took. The membership was open to the representatives from development sectors and NGOs and also to the religious leaders, media, government officials including those from the political administration and police, the political leaders, the men's organizations, the activists and local councilors.

In the beginning there was so much enthusiasm that the Regional Manager felt it had started to interfere with his management. As a result it was decided to draw up terms of reference. This was done with the help of the members. A key extract reads as follows:

> 'KACC is the abbreviation of Khwendo Kor Area Coordination Committee. This committee was formed in FR Bannu on July 05 2004. The idea was floated in a meeting of stakeholder held at KK office FR Bannu after the attack on KK's vehicle on 16th June 2004. Initially a committee of 16 members formed to tackle the issue of this attack, which was later on converted into a regular committee under the name of KACC. Total members of the committee are 16 from various class of society including government, CSOs [civil society organizations], professionals, journalists, educationists, lawyers and community while KK Program Facilitator is performing as focal person of the committee. The committee meets once in a month or two to discuss the issues, problems faced by KK and also the development scenario at Bannu and FR Bannu.'

Efforts were made to bring the most influential people of the area into the KACC. The minutes of its February 2005 meetings says:

> 'In the previous [meeting] it was decided that APA [assistant political agent] should be also given membership in the committee to represent FR. In this regard it was decided that to convince the district Nazim {elected local government member} and DCO [District Coordination Officer, new term used for the previous district commissioner] we should get help from former senator Mr. *Malik* Farid Ullah Khan. It is decided *Malik* Gul Rauf will get appointment from him for meeting with KACC members, 17th of February is fixed for the meeting.'

Policy Level Advocacy and Coalition Building

Soon after the formation of the KACC KK started advocacy work designed to influence policies. KACC took an active and leading role in this work. This allowed KK to remain in the background while local KACC members from all walks of society challenged government policies and actions. An extract from a progress report can provide an example of its work:

> 'The movement against FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulation Act) was also one of the main agenda points of both the KACC meetings. In this regard it was discussed that the FCR is badly affecting the people residing in FATA areas and termed FCR as the main hurdle in the path of development for FATA. They decided that they would start a movement against FCR by involving different tribal leaders, influential, *maliks* and representatives from CSOs to influence the Government policy regarding FCR.' (KK progress report Jan-March 2005)

In keeping with this note KACC organized seminars on FCR in Bannu. Many *maliks* from FR Bannu took part, although they had previously seen FCR as something untouchable. They found the events extremely challenging and useful.

KACC also organized seminars on the extremely sensitive Hadood Ordinance. This law is promulgated in the name of Islamic Sharia law but in practice it is used in a way that discriminates against women.

The KACC would also take a stand on 'difficult to raise issues' such as the security of KK staff and would send a delegation to the relevant government offices. It also organized dialogues with the hard liner leaders from extremist political parties including the Taliban over matters such as poverty, the need for development and girls education and the way KK could be helped to work on these issues.

KACC members would also visit the villages where KK was facing difficulties as third party mediators and try to remove misunderstandings by further meetings and visits. For example in the village of Gerah Shejehan the KK supported school was attracting an increased number of girls whereas the deserted government girls school in the same village was owned by a retired officer in the FATA education department. He thought he would lose his school to KK, so he started creating problems for KK. With the help of KACC this problem was resolved.

For its part KK has enabled KACC members to enhance their skills and experience by taking part in national and provincial NGO conferences. Although the KACC has been extremely helpful however, its coordination and its members' expectations have been extremely demanding for the regional office.

Reaching Out to Village Women

The reason for selecting Khwendo Kor Women and Children program for the action research was that it focuses on the empowerment of women and children in the Pushtun societies of NWFP. Its most important target group in FATA was therefore the village women and children in the selected villages.

As described above one reason for selection was that the people of the village were very cooperative and were asking for developmental projects of a kind which KK

had the expertise to provide. In addition the villagers would ensure the security of the KK professionals both females and males so that they could be about in the area. For example, in the beginning *maliks* would send men with weapons to accompany the KK staff to their villages.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the villages were also selected on the basis of need. Generally there was a clear need for female education. Either no girls' school was available, or the school was situated in a place where it was difficult for girls to attend or their drop out rate from the boys' school was very high. Generally also there was a lack of the basic health facilities and the women had no access to economic opportunities.

In the beginning the volume of need uncovered in the villages was overwhelming. The people had basic needs of many kinds and were asking for all kinds of help. For example, they wanted political representation and changes in the FCR as well improvements in the services for health and education. It was thus very difficult for KK to balance the priority to be given to women's needs as against those of men or of the community as a whole. KK was bombarded with demands it provide employment to the young tribal men looking for jobs. Both women and men wanted water supply schemes such as pumps, tube wells, roads and hospitals. KK struggled very hard to get local female staff so as not lose its focus in the face of the overpowering patriarchal agendas, however justified these might be.

The Regional Manager for FATA wrote:

> 'Initially there was a concept among tribals that NGOs have lot of funds without any audit like political agent, so they preferred to work with KK on the basis of this understanding. Although KK team remained busy to explain how we are ensuring checks and balances and how we are spending money and how strong system are there but the tribals were in *JUNOON*
> (craze) of earning money without believing and hearing the words and explanation of KK team, demanding and asking for working in their villages. We took this as an opportunity for entry and with the passage of time we

moulded them and realized the fact on them with introducing of new programs and interest based activities like construction of toilets and hand pumps in schools, Anti mosquito sprays, partnership with community organization to implement hardware [physical infrastructure project] with the aim and hope to further get funds from donors and government, provision of good food in the trainings, ID cards and vote preparation for women and men so they can poll vote.'

These pressures made it increasingly difficult for KK to keep its focus on the strategic needs of women in the areas of its expertise: female education, primary health and income generation.

At this stage it was important to reach a situation where both the village people and KK could reach achieve their goals. The reasons for this included the following:

a) Men had to agree to the introduction of the program and did not respond well to an exclusive concentration on women's development and education
b) If the villagers were to support the program their priorities had to be pursued at least equally
c) If female education and development was to be sustainable it was necessary that communities had their other needs met. For example, without water education could not be sustained either

It was also important that all parties realized that:

a) KK was a small organization with limited capacity and could not solve all their problems alone,
b) Development was not to be seen in a conventional manner as a favour to *maliks* for keeping law and order or as a 'one off' intervention such as installing a hand pump, lining a water course or establishing a girls school in a village.

c) Instead development was an on going process which involved changes in behaviour and the involvement of ordinary people including women and children in the conceptualization and implementation of the projects,
d) The projects were mainly the means of bringing people men and women together so they could build their own capacities for acquiring information and accessing the government' departments and resources. In this way they would be able to solve such problems on their own in the long run.
e) Every one respects KK's strategy of working with everyone without becoming a party to their beliefs and agendas.

Rationalization

These considerations led to heated discussions in the KK head office. There was a need to clarify the purpose of the project, justify the intervention in FATA and provide a rationale for the need to do things somewhat differently there.

As a result, it was agreed that the organization would not lose sight of its strengths and would consolidate its expertise in the fields of female education, health and income generation. Work in at least one of these fields was pre requisite for involvement in a village. If work of this kind was going ahead, KK would try its best to assist in other ways as well.

For these reasons KK paid attention to the priorities of the local men. It was not, however, in a position to take action on these needs itself. Instead it needed to build alliances with others. The following extract from a 2003 KK progress report to Action Aid makes the position clear:

> 'To address the need, [keep] attraction and strengthen KK program, strong linkages need to be established with government line agencies, civil society organizations, political and religious leaders, Press, media etc. So through linkages KK should facilitate hardware activities in Narmi Khel and Sardi Khel i.e. installation of Hand pumps, arranging of free medical camps,

Construction of watercourses and water tanks for irrigation purposes and . KK senior management at PCU and RPU need to interact with SRSP, various medicines companies, health specialists, On Farm Water management at Bannu, Soil conservation department, FATA officials at Peshawar, EDO health, Health secretary and also with Female MPAs and MNAs of MMA for seeking support in FATA interventions.'

Getting to know the people

In order not to lose momentum or the interest of the people in the selected villages and to keep them engaged, KK drew on its experience and gave more time to meeting and getting to know the villagers. Numerous meetings were held with the activists, *maliks* and other interested people mainly men in the villages. In Ramadan *Iftar* parties were held and people were invited to KK's regional offices so that they could get familiar with KK's mission and objectives and its work in the other areas of NWFP.

These discussions raised some fundamental issues. In particular the villagers wanted to know why we focused on women's education and development. In response we would give them information on the number of women dying in childbirth, the numbers who could not read, the poverty of women, and the lack of organizations working for them. The discussions would also touch upon the Islamic teaching on female education and rights.

In case of Khyber Agency men would interact directly with the female Regional Manager for these discussions. In FR Bannu also the female staff, if needed, would explain KK's various activities and the kind of help it could provide. The following extract from the KK progress report July September 2003 explains the efforts in this regard:

> ‘Social mobilization [is] the backbone of development process [and] was initiated to [spread] good knowledge of development work and KK. KK is in mobilization stage at FR Bannu and are doing only mobilization to have conducive environment for KK program in the area…To have good and strong relationship and mobilization for KK program the strategy of interaction and identification of new activist was adopted. Various visits were paid inside Bannu and at FR Bannu to meet with local people and introduced KK program. As a result active and strong activists identified and established good relationship with them…This was initial step to introduce KK at vast level at FR Bannu area…Number of meetings held at KK office and at village level to introduce KK nature of work and Action Aid funding mechanism. Visits paid to different villages include Gul Badin Sardi Khel, Kaski Sardi Khel, Mir Alai Sardi Khel, Kheraki Mamma Khel and meet with local community there.’

All this helped considerably in relieving tensions, and building better relations on both sides.

Social Mobilization and Organization

At village level attention was given to the mobilization of men and women around their own interests. The activists in the villages would be informed ahead of proposed meetings for the formation of the interest groups or organizations in their respective villages. They would be asked to spread word about the meetings to women and men to ask them to attend at agreed times.

The meetings would always start with the recitation from the Holy Quran and a person from the village was encouraged to do this. According to the Regional Manager (personal email) it was essential to:

> ‘Link the whole program with Islamic values [such] as the whole approach we are following is [already] in Islam like consultation, shoora [sharing],… [We

> must] take into consideration the local culture like using local words rather [than] development Jargons (i.e for word 'Meeting' use the Pushtu word Maracca, instead of using the name 'Village organization' {call it}as Salwayshta etc and observing strict Purdah by KK female staff while visiting community.'

The agenda is set for the meeting in the light of needs and priorities that have already been identified. On the male side people are encouraged to form a village organization. The people present elect or select office bearers such as the president and secretary and agree to meet regularly.

The KK male community facilitator for social organization (CFSO) would encourage and facilitate men, mainly the activists among the participants, to form different committees around their own interests for various purposes such as education, health, water, or sports. These committee members take responsibility for coordination with the KK female community facilitators (CFs) for education, health or social organization as need arises.

> 'It was decided in the meeting to form an unstructured group comprising of one President and General secretary selected by community in the meeting. Each village formed their own group who would responsible for developmental activities in their respective village with the consultation, consent and active involvement of whole village people. Five groups formed comprising of 6-11 membership in each group.' (KK progress report, July-September 2003)

Similar processes were undertaken with the females in the villages. The local culture forbids communication between unrelated males and females. In order to ensure that smooth communication takes place between the men's and women' s

groups, the active female relatives of the male activists were encouraged to head the various committees.

The time needed to form female groups is generally longer than that needed for male ones. Initially religious leaders raised objections to the movement of KK female staff in the villages. As a result KK decided as stated in the Progress Report for July-September 2003:

> 'It was also found that female staff movement especially very young female in the area in this stage is not feasible as clergymen and general community is very sensitive in this regard. So it was suggested and decided that old and mature female staff at FR-Bannu need to be hired and that frequent visits of female staff be avoided for 1-2 months.'

Nevertheless, despite difficulties even in the very initial stage of intervention, KK was able to form women's groups. The KK progress report, October-December 2003 says:

> 'Khwendo Kor is the first organization to intervene in the area of FR Bannu with the approach of Women Development. 3 female organizations were formed in three villages of FR area…

Capacity Building

KK aimed to increase the capacity of the women and men's organizations. The committee members needed to understand how to keep records and plan and hold meetings. They also need to understand the ways governments plan, how to access resources and much else besides. The needed information is provided through discussion with CFs, visits from outside officials and professionals and exposure to the work of KK and other NGOs inside and outside FATA. For example, the members of a men's organization from FR Bannu were taken to the northern district of Dir in NWFP where KK has been working for the last ten years. These visits

helped them to see how KK has been working and how funds were used and in this way increased confidence.

There is also formal training. For example, the July–September 2004 Progress Report states:

> 'Three days social organization training was organized at KK's regional office FR-Bannu for all partner villages facilitated by external facilitator from Institute of Research and Development Studies (IRDS) Peshawar. 30 community members participated in the training from villages Garerha Wazir, Terkhoba, Dir Nawab and Kheiraki Mamakhel. The participants learned about social organization, organization, leadership, development, difference between development and charity, record keeping and registration.'

Regular Visits to the Villages

Following the formation of the committees the KK female community facilitators for social organization, health and education would start visiting the villages more regularly. This is done in a very coordinated manner. The male CF social organizers would inform the relevant male village committee members of the KK's female CFs' visits to their village. The village committee members in turn would in advance inform their own family and other village women of the KK female CFs' visits, dates and timings.

Conclusion

The difficulties faced by KK and discussed in the previous chapter were severe. After the attack on its vehicle KK thoroughly analyzed the situation and came to two main conclusions; that work in some villages was possible and that it had to work more for its acceptance as an organization. As a result, it continued its work in the villages where it had support and also made extra efforts to know more about all categories of people including the Taliban.

It expanded and diversified its support base by including journalists, the religious leaders and other NGOs. KK Area Coordination Committee was formed consisting of membership from these groups of people to support its work. It hired skilled tribal local people and provided all staff including the drivers with mobile phones for security purposes. It strengthened its relationships with all government departments including the ones responsible for security and would keep them informed of its activities and movements.

At community level, KK had to find ways of addressing the enormous needs of people, women in particular, in the selected villages where KK was working. People were looking for help in matters such as water for drinking, irrigation and repeal of FCR which were outside the field of KK's expertise. Nevertheless, for sustaining female education and development and keeping men interested in its work it extended its support in these areas.

Various village based committees were formed around particular interests such as water and health and were then linked to other organizations including the relevant government departments. KACC organized forums on repeal of FCR and other issues and religious leaders were invited to events and functions. All these efforts helped in developing better understanding and acceptance for KK's work. In the next chapter we will discuss how education, health and income generation projects were implemented in the selected villages of FATA.

Chapter 12
Work on Specific Needs

Introduction

The previous chapter described the strategies KK adopted to counter the severe resistance to its female educational and development projects. Part of its success lay in its ability to meet specific needs. This chapter is about how it did this. It describes:

- The organizational aspects of its work
- Its work on education, health, and income generation
- The nature of its collaboration with other organizations.

A concluding section summarizes the principles underlying this work.

The sources used for the chapter include KK's policy documents for health, education and micro enterprises development, KK's progress reports and electronic correspondence with KK's managers responsible for projects in FATA.

Development of KK as an organization

Soon after the decision to start work in the selected FATA area, administration and management were decentralized to the regional team. They enjoyed complete authority and support from the head office in taking decisions within a framework of policy and training which they developed in collaboration with the head office.

The team hired people females and males from the local areas who have been trained and fully engaged in the decision-making, planning, management and implementation. They are encouraged to enhance their personal and professional

skills through formal training in areas such as computer, English report writing, communication, presentation skills and gender sensitivity and awareness. They also gain from their experiential learning from conflicts and team work and are helped to analyze their own strengths and weaknesses. As a result they become better equipped as developmental professionals.

The KK progress report for October-December 2005 illustrates the effort involved:

> 'Capacitating of regional team was the focus of management at region and head office level in the relevant areas for achieving results and staff career development. Regular guidelines and support i.e. on job training was the continuous input of KK through out the period while some formal trainings includes Organization development training and Gender training organized by KK for its partner Men organizations and one teacher training for CBS teachers also received by 2 SO male and 1 community facilitator education respectively.
>
> Social organizer male, female and community facilitator health and education participated and received Gender and report writing training organized by HID section at Peshawar 3 days each. Program Facilitator and community facilitator social organization participated in annual sponsorship training organized by Action Aid sponsorship Unit. Community facilitator social organization female and regional finance and admin officer participated in DA annual review workshop at Lahore. Community facilitator health was capacitated during a TBA training organized for village women during the period.'

The value of participation and inculcating ownership at all levels including that of the KK regional teams and community always remained central. In reply to an email the Regional Manager wrote:

> ‘Most of the time the manager is working on the ownership building among team so the team is collectively working till the time to resolve issues and problems.’

The processes described below were informed by this combination of training and policy but implemented by staff exercising considerable autonomy.

Education

According to KK’s Education Policy Guidelines:

> ‘The Education Programme is based on the principles of participation, accessibility, acceptability and affordability.’

This section describes how these principles were put into effect.

First Steps

The demands for girls’ schools were formally received from the village men and women in the form of written applications, through resolutions made at village meetings or in the village development plans prepared at the end of PRA exercises. The next important steps involved:

- Identifying and documenting school age girls who were not going to school
- Identifying a local teacher
- Agreeing a suitable venue for the school
- Agreeing the division of responsibility for managing and sustaining the school

Throughout these steps the active involvement of local people in managing and helping the school gave them a sense of achievement. It increased their confidence, their sense of ownership of the project, and the trust between them and KK.

Identification of School Age Girls not going to school

In the beginning the activists, both women and men, were asked to get information from the girls and their parents and, where appropriate, seek their consent for sending their daughters to school. To do this they would often involve young boys who would go to every street and indulge in door to door talk about this. This helped to raise awareness of the issue of girls' education, engage the girls and their parents, especially mothers, in the process, and share out the task of gathering information.

Identification of Teachers

The availability of at least one educated female in or near a village is one of the main criteria for selecting it for girls' education. This is ensured prior to the final selection during visits and meetings with people from the area.

The village education committee members take responsibility for contacting the parents, husband or father-in-law of this educated female. They also assess her suitability in terms of her moral character, the sources of her education and her family background. If the woman's relatives agree, KK female CF education staff make contact with her and her family in order to remove unjustified apprehension and anxieties. They also mention the incentives in the form of salary, training and the employees' old age benefit scheme that benefit the teachers who work with KK.

The potential teachers in the villages are then encouraged to apply formally to KK for the job.

Appointment of Teachers

The official hiring of the female teachers took place after the qualification tests. In the case of FATA KK had to be flexible. Some of the proposed teachers did not have the necessary qualification or evidence of ability. KK had to provide training for these teachers so that they could teach.

In many villages there were no educated females. The village men's organizations then suggested the appointment of male teachers. To maintain their motivation KK would ask the prospective male teachers and the men's organization to negotiate with the local Taliban so that this was allowed. As the Regional Manager puts it:

> 'As local [male] teacher has interest of salary so he does his best efforts to talk and get support of local people and Taliban. Resultantly these people who opposing NGO especially religious leaders [started] cooperating for the sake of the teacher as customarily they are not allowed to stop the livelihood of a fellow villager.'

KK agreed to the appointment of men teachers on the condition that they had to ensure girls' and mothers' participation in the schools, the regular attendance and good performance of the teachers, and supervision of schools by KK female CF education in the villages. However, female KK CFs were not allowed to work where the Taliban were in total control and in these areas KK male CFs would make supervisory visits.

Engaging Government Education Officials

KK always invited the government female agency education office staff at the regional level to participate in the interview panels and tests. The aim was to share information, ensure compatibility with the government education system, and provide credibility and legitimacy to KK's educational work. In some cases,

however, the government staff would avoid traveling to villages in FATA for security reasons.

After the testing exercise agreements were signed between the men's organization, KK and the teachers and they were given appointment letters by the Regional Manager s.

All this is described in KK's Education Policy Guidelines. For example:

> 'Community or VEC will identify potential Teacher/s. The selection panel will include RPU staff along with community or VEC members who will take [i.e. supervise] test and interview for selection of teachers. Test/ Interviews venue will be communicated to candidates. Written application from the candidates would be obtained. KK will prefer the involvement of the District Education Dept staff eg ADOs in the teacher selection process and also to validate her certification. PF will issue appointment letter to teacher.'

Identification of Agreed Locations for Schools

Over this time the male CF social organizers are in touch with the men in order to identify suitable venues where most people would be happy to send their daughters to school. This had to be agreed by all involved, the girls themselves, their mothers, the village elders, the *maliks*, and the religious leaders. Usually a *malik 's* house would be offered as people in general would feel secure about it.

School Opening Ceremonies and Other Events

The opening ceremonies and related events in the KK supported girls' schools are deliberately meant to be well celebrated and well attended. All the major work involved is done by the village people themselves. They decide what food is to be served and who is to be invited. There is lot of excitement and discussion about

such events which are very different from the marriages and *jirgas* to which the people are used.

The village education committee members and the leaders of the men's and women's organizations spearhead such events. The village religious and secular leaders are invited to these ceremonies and asked to make speeches around topics such as the need for girls' education from an Islamic perspective. Local print media are also invited. All this is done to ensure the wider acceptance of girls' education, acknowledge the contribution of the activists and men's and women's groups and to encourage the girls and their mothers.

School age girls along with their mothers come to the school venues meet with the teachers and enroll their daughters in school. On the same day KK hands over school material, black board, charts, attendance registers, sitting mats and chairs for the teachers.

Other events could also be celebrated for a similar reason. A KK Progress Report illustrates how Independence Day was celebrated at one school:

> '50 community members participated which includes the fathers of the 17 learners in the school. The learners presented skits, poems and debates. …Best performers in the ceremony were awarded with prizes. Education Department Officials, Civil Society Organizations, Local Government Departments and KK staff participated in the event. *Malik* Mir Mohammad Khan … was the Chief Guest.'

Supervisory Visits

KK staff make regular supervisory visits to the schools and report in an agreed format. For example, a report made near the beginning of the project notes as follows:.

S. No.	School and village name	Teacher Name	Class wise details		Remarks
			Girls	Boys	
1	Akra Barat Community Based School	Ms. Suraj	15	1	
2	Gul Badin Community Based School	Ms. Fazma	23	-	
3	Garerha Wazir Community Based School	Ms. Rukhsana Ms. Dil Sara	52	29	
4	Noor Musa Khel Community Based School	Ms. Abida	12	9	Closed due to the 16th June 2004 incident and on the advice of the *Malik* and community.

Training and support of Teachers

As the teachers are locally recruited they share the status of other local women. They may be indecisive, or lacking in confidence, assertiveness or self-esteem. They have a limited ability to travel. *Malik s* or male members of their family may collect their wages so that they may not have control of their earnings.

For these reasons high quality teacher training is an important component of the KK's female education program. A 2004 progress report notes that:

> 'The teachers were given on job training on record keeping, classroom management, school discipline and pronunciation of Urdu and English alphabets.'

KK has made it mandatory that the teachers' salaries are paid monthly in the relevant regional offices on a fixed date. All teachers come to the office and not only draw their salaries but also share their experiences and learning.

Formation of Mothers' Committees

The practice of encouraging the mothers of the female pupils to form mothers' committees (female VECs) began soon after the start of the project. This enabled the women to come to the schools and share their problems and experiences. The committee members were given training designed to enhance their skills and confidence thus allowing them to take responsibilities in school management. They were also inducted into the roles and responsibilities of these committees and ways of monitoring and supervising the progress of the school.

Table 12.1: Role and Responsibilities of Female and Male VECs

Female	Male
• Supporting all aspects of school activities for ensuring smooth running of the school for achieving best results for the students • Monitoring of school, teachers, and students for ensuring best quality teaching and learning • Holding regular monthly meetings on school issues • Provision of materials required by the school which are not provided by KK • Giving feed-back to KK regarding all matters relating school, students and teachers performance • Co-ordination with male VEC school and education matters • Supporting teachers in school management, record keeping, implementation of special events etc. • Keeping records of all meetings and finances eg fees, savings and expenditure	• Supporting the school and advocating its achievements and benefits in the wider world outside the village • Responsible for construction work in school • Co-ordination with KK and other stakeholders regarding education matters for school sustainability • Co-ordination with female VEC regarding school performance • Assisting the school in all matters that are outside the purview of the female VEC • Holding regular monthly meetings and discussing school progress • Keeping records of all meetings and finances

The responsibilities of the male and female VECs are now laid out in the KK education policy guidelines.

School Management

The mothers' committees look after donations to the school, authorize expenditure from these funds, decide school hours in different seasons, take care of the cleaning and interact with the teacher regarding the education of their daughters.

Men's organizations (MOs) also monitor the school. A 2004 Progress Report notes that:

> 'A meeting was held with MO of {village} on increasing school enrollment. The MO … decided to replace the existing teacher whose performance was not satisfactory. It was further decided to meet with her husband and take up the issue with him before replacing her. There is another educated female in the community who could be appointed as a teacher.'

Adult Literacy Centers

The establishment of girls' schools with the mothers' participation prompted illiterate women over the age of fifteen to show an increasing interest in their own education. As a result with the support of men' organization in the villages literacy several centers were opened.

Involvement of Education Department

KK aims to ensure the survival of the community based girls' schools by arranging their eventual transfer to the government system. Collaboration with the education department is crucial from the beginning. Their staff are involved in activities related to female education in the villages. The children take government

examinations, and VECs are encouraged to make contact with the Education Department. A Progress Report from 2005 illustrates these points:

> '177 students have appeared in the examination. 143 students have passed the examination. The oral exams were given by the Education Department to the students of grade-KG. Rest of the 34 students was not promoted because of their age and strong recommendation of FVECs [Female Village Education Committees] and teachers….
>
> The roof of the CBS room at [village] was destroyed due to heavy rainfalls... The quality of education and enrollment at the CBS has been affected badly as no alternate space is available in the area. The MO president has shifted the CBS to his home temporarily. For reconstruction of the school roof the Village Organization submitted a request … to CM [Chief Minister] office and District Authorities.'

KK's involvement in primary health care

Health was an additional area in which KK sought to intervene. Faced with poor health and lack of health services the women resorted to taking their ailing children or themselves for treatment to the traditional healers, shrines or other traditional sources of help. The Community Report 2, 2005 submitted to Action Aid reported that the use of *Taweez* (amulets), *Dam* (sorcery), and *Minat* on *Ziarat* (Prayer for healing at a shrine) were commonly used, that children infected with measles were not allowed to drink clean water, and that chest infections were commonly treated with donkey milk, turmeric and egg plaster.

Against this background KK aimed at prevention and lasting change. Its strategy was to

> to enhance the intellectual base, skills and behavioral change at community level. KK facilitates communities to take preventive measures leading to more

awareness about women and children health issues, better skills to encounter health problems at the village level and under take preventive measure against health problems.

The work began with the PRA exercises. These were designed to make the participants, particularly men, feel at ease. So the discussion would start with the health issues of children and move to community issues such as malaria, hepatitis, or tuberculosis. Only then would it turn to the culturally sensitive issues of mothers' health. PRA tools were used to encourage participation and objective expression of views. For example Matrix, Pie Diagram and Seasonal charts were used for diseases and deaths during pregnancies. After water, the second most important need expressed would be for help in health, medical check ups, medicines and the provision of basic mother and child health facilities through construction of hospitals and or BHUs.

After gaining the men's confidence KK would establish men's health committees. KK's male CFSO would then explain to them KK's health program, its preventive approach and its common KK principles (participation, affordability, accessibility and acceptability). The CFs would often be asked if the program had anything to do with family planning which was thought un-Islamic. In reply they repeatedly emphasized the need for the program to be acceptable.

In practice the field staff found it difficult to convince people of the utility of the preventive approach. The village people wanted immediate tangible products, medicines, health services, and medical staff in the BHUs in their villages. They regarded health awareness sessions and the training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) as just talking. *Maliks* in particular were more interested in getting the contracts for the construction of buildings on their personal land in their villages and the appointment of close relatives to government jobs in these facilities. They saw no benefit to themselves in changes in hygiene and pre and post natal care whose effects on maternal and infant mortality were not immediately apparent. They would often ridicule KK' health work or ask questions which the CFs could not answer without breaking cultural taboos.

Faced with this resistance KK decided to provide some immediate tangible help in the form of Medical camps, adding these to its health awareness and sessions and TBA training.

Medical Camps

At the start of its work in FATA KK conducted several medical camps in the selected villages. The village men's groups and committee members were fully engaged in these camps. For example, they were involved in: deciding the venues, dates and timings of the camps, visiting households and informing people of these details, assessing the number of people expected to attend the camps so that medicines could be bought accordingly for the most common diseases, informing KK's regional offices for advance preparations, and arranging food arrangements for the doctors and their staff in the villages.

All this involved a lot of work and KK delegated almost all village based responsibilities to the village people. There would be a lot of excitement about the medical camps, the doctors and other guests coming to their village, people would talk about these events before and for a long time after.

The October-December 2003 KK Progress Report describes a medical camp which served 700 people drawn from a radius of ten miles. The camp was run by three women doctors, including a pathologist and a gynecologist, supported by technicians from the district health department. The report comments that:

> 'The women had no awareness about the usage of medicines. They thought that they [could] benefit by having plenty of medicines and … injections. A lactating mother did not know that she was pregnant and four of her months had past. This will be her 12th baby. …E and T infections were found in most of the women, men and children. Women were found very anemic … complaining of pain in the bones because of malnutrition and no proper medical treatment. Most of the patients [had] eye diseases and were not

> realizing the problem. Women were found very weak during their pregnancy and were not even able to stand up once they settled on the floor. Many children [had] stomach pain due to worms. Skin problems were also treated during the medical camp. 2 girls and 1 boy were found deaf and dumb and were referred to E & T specialists. The old patients were complaining of body aches and weakness [and] were treated accordingly. Many male patients were complaining of asthma and they were referred to E and T specialists. Many young boys had positive MP test of malaria that were then referred to the hospital.'

The medical camps had an extremely positive impact on our work. KK gained in credibility with government officials and was able to establish very good collaboration with the government health department for FATA at the regional level; the village health committee members gained confidence from establishing links with the government health department personnel; the *maliks* became more cooperative because they had taken a lead, and ordinary people women and men not only directly benefited but also asked for more health activities.

Medical camps have become a regular feature of KK' s health program in FATA. For example, a report to Action Aid in 2005 described a program run by KK in collaboration with the local health department. The program was aimed at Malaria and Lashmaniasis. It combined five health camps with free medicines and anti-mosquito spray campaigns in 14 villages. KK provided the logistics and finance for the medicines and the Health Department the medical expertise.

Training of the Traditional Birth Attendants

TBAs traditionally attend deliveries and provide pre and postnatal care. Training these women is the most important part of the KK health program.

The male health committee members are asked to support the program by asking their female family members to cooperate with the KK female CF health. The KK

CF health who is herself a qualified Lady Health Visitor, then holds meetings with the village women and collects information about the potential TBAs in the village. She also holds meetings to explain the proposed 45 days intense raining and to get consent for regular attendance. The male CF SO discusses the venue for the training with the *maliks* and the men's organization.

The KK selection criteria for women selected for the TBA training are that they should:

- Be members of the Women's Organization.
- Already be involved in traditional delivery practices.
- Show an interest in obtaining training.
- Have time to train and practice as TBAs.
- Should preferably be more than 30 years of age.
- Be acceptable to community.
- Be mobile (socially)
- Be the resident of the community/village/neighboring village.
- Demonstrate some knowledge of health care.
- Have available family support
- Be able and willing to serve 15-20 households.

The duration of the training is 45 days and the topics of the training course include:

> Nutrition, balance diet, danger signs and referral criteria during pregnancies, position of the baby, basic hygiene, vaccination, use of blade for cutting the umbilical cord, weaning diet, preparation of ORS [oral re-hydration solution] and so on.

Normally the training is provided when a group of minimum eight and maximum fifteen TBAs is formed who are willing to attend it regularly. However, in FATA in the beginning KK once agreed to provide this training to three women only. A *malik* had asked for the training and agreed that several TBAs should

attend. He was interested that the BHU on his land should have his wife as a government paid TBA. Later he prevented the other TBAs from attending the training so that his wife could get the job without competing others. She did get the certificate and the job. Other difficulties have included the inability to hold the course because of the personal enmities of the participants and the refusal of officials from the health department to attend to accredit the participants because of the security risks.

Once the TBA training starts many other women in the village come to see what is happening. They question the trainers and the trainees and talk about it to their men and families. At the end of the training the TBAs are given a basic kit and pictorial hand outs to which to refer. They seem to be more confident and use their improved skills with pride. These TBAs already are members of the village women' organization and are very active. They often act as spokespersons for KK and the village women and they take leading role in village based activities, such as the medical camps and training in skills for generating income described below.

Follow Up and Supervision

It is important to see if the trained TBAs are applying their improved skills. For this reason regular follow-up visits are made to the villages and meetings are held with women' groups and the TBAs themselves. This is thought to give a fairly good idea of the utility and value given to the trained TBAs. Quite often refresher courses are provided and meetings with men' groups are held to emphasize the importance of using this human resource.

A Progress Report in 2005 reported on 5 follow up visits to 10 TBAs. They were found to be seriously underused. This partly reflected continuing suspicions of NGOs but further questioning established that the TBAs themselves were also lacking in the necessary skills. The report recommended further training for the TBAs and more awareness sessions for the villagers. As a result health awareness sessions were conducted, refresher courses for the trained TBAs were organized,

meetings were held with the village health committee members and therefore on the next follow up visits the situation had greatly improved:

> '46 Follow-up visits were paid to 16 TBAs during reporting period. Most of the TBA found involved in serving community by delivering awareness sessions, conducting deliveries and referring serious cases to nearby hospitals.
>
> 9 TBAs conducted 21 successful deliveries while 4 TBAs referred 7 complicated cases to district head quarter hospital while 16 TBAs delivered 32 health awareness sessions to 600 women on washing, Post natal care, normal pregnancy, microbe, Tetanus EPI, nine month preparation, breast feeding and nutrition after 4 months during reporting period. Beside TBAs progress focus was on the problems TBAs are facing during practices. Khwendo Kor health team giving technical advises and planning for refresher of these TBAs.' (KK Progress Report, October-December 2006)

Collaboration with Health Department

The TBAs who complete the full KK TBA training course are awarded certificates which are certified and countersigned by the government district health officers. KK encourages the female government health officers to visit the village while the training is taking place and after the training to conduct formal tests of the TBAs' skills and learning. Once their qualification is officially recognized and endorsed these TBAs can apply for government jobs and be paid for them.

> '25 TBAs are trained in 4 villages of FR and Bannu and 2 of them are appointed in the government dispensary. 1040 women and children have been given health talks and awareness on different health related issues in 20 villages.' (KK progress report, January-March 2005)

In addition the government staff are invited for different events organized in the villages such as the medical camps, awards distribution ceremonies. They are also encouraged to take part in anti malaria sprays campaigns, and the polio drops and

vaccination in the KK' s working villages. KK is often able to make it easier for female government staff to come to the villages.

Micro Enterprise (ME) Development

The third main arm of KK's activities comprises Micro Enterprise development. In NWFP this involves two types of service:

Financial services

Conventional financing {loans with standard charges and fixed interest rates}

Islamic mode of financing (Murabaha) {Non interest Based}

Non-Financial Services

Capacity building

Linkages and Exposure visit etc

Interest group formation

Up till now KK has not extended its financial services to FATA. The Regional Manager explained the position as follows:

> 'We started income generation activities for village women in FATA from the very beginning by giving them skill trainings, establishment of vocational training centers but did not provide them credit. There are two reasons for not providing of credit to the women. 1st the conventional lending is considered bad in the religion so we believe to work without challenging the religious values and culture. So we are in the process of introducing Islamic mode of financing, capacitating our staff as well as aware the community about Islamic mode of financing. The 2nd reason is the fears of non recovery as the community organization are not so mature so we did not want to take risk in initial stages. Now after 3-4 years of working in FATA we are thinking to provide credit under Islamic mode of financing to those women who are trained in one or other way. Now we are confident to run full fledge micro enterprise program with the support of mature men and women organizations.'

In this context the Progress Report, April-June 2005 notes slow but steady progress:

> 'The WOs of Tarkhoba Kalan & Dil Nawaz Barat & all MOs requested for skill training on food processing [for example, learning how to dry fruit]. The WOs have restricted mobility and strict cultural ethos so they couldn't come to the office and neither to one another villages. So the team decided to divide this training in three phases. First phase of the training was delivered to 10 women of Tarkhoba Kalan, second phase for Dil Nawaz Barat and Kheraki Khas is planned in the next quarter. It was also decided that external resource person would facilitate the 2 phases while KK SO and the trained female of 2 villages will facilitate the 3rd phase at Kheraki Khas in next quarter. In this way KK is trying to increase women mobility and also further polishing the skills of women. Women of two villages had received the said training. Skill training for MOs was planned in this quarter but due to non-availability of the trainer the activity was postponed to the next quarter.'

Engaging Other Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations

Collaboration with other organizations and important individuals is a crosscutting theme in all KK's work. Good relationships with the police and security services are necessary for security. Good relationships with the education and health department are needed to validate the programs, provide expertise and ensure that the work continues after KK's funding stops. In addition the organization cannot provide services in specialized fields such as the construction and lining of water courses or the provision of medical aid. The needs are vast and the population to be served large and scattered. In order to provide the holistic and sustainable development program at which it aims KK has to collaborate with other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In practice KK has considerable differences of opinion on many issues with many people and organizations including the government. Nevertheless it has tried to keep in close touch with all parties interested in the welfare of poor women and children and to develop good working relationships with all involved. Some

examples have already been given. Others reflected the need to respond to *malik s* or men's organizations. As the Regional Manager notes:

> 'Yes always the men community demanding for hardware. We strategize it and agreed .. to use this as mobilization tool. We approved those hardware activities which ultimate benefits goes to women, like with water supply women workload reduced as fetching and bringing water is the responsibility of women and on the other hand unhygienic water affecting women and child health the most as they have no access to health facilities as compare to men. Sanitation is the need of women and children and we construct toilets inside the school where girls and women teacher is using this facility. On the other hand men community mobilized by doing hardware projects.'

Typically these projects involve collaboration with other government agencies. For example, the January-March 2005 Progress Report notes collaboration with a number of agencies over water management and ID cards (needed for voting and for bank accounts):

> 'Soil Conservation Department and Communication and Works Department Bannu evaluated the spurs and bridges at village Kheraki Mama Khel and found it satisfactory…The MO of Khairaki Mama Khel has established linkages with On Farm Water Management Department for Water Courses to manage canal water irrigation. The mentioned department conducted a survey and feasibility of the proposed project of watercourses… Series of meetings with SWD {Social Welfare Department} and Industrial Development Department for registration of Village Based Organizations under CCB and Societies Act 1860… NADRA {National Assessment and Data Registration Agency} Swift Registration Center agreed and commit for mobile camp in 13 villages for preparing of ID cards for women and men in the May 05. '

Conclusion

In keeping with the strategies discussed in the previous chapter KK's work in the selected villages was not limited to opening schools and enabling girls' to attend them. Its activities reflected several key principles and the different strategies needed to underpin them.

Firstly, the spirit behind whatever KK did in each and every sector was to ensure that village people, in particular women, participated in and owned the activities. For example, at organizational level KK operated a decentralized management structure, employed staff from the local area wherever possible, and strove to ensure that they owned the program. For similar reasons village people were engaged in almost all activities including the identification of teachers, agreement on a suitable venue for school, selection of teachers, and management and supervision of the school. Both health and educational activities required the active involvement of village activists and parents, both mothers and fathers.

Secondly, KK applied its well established systems and procedures for implementing these projects. Thus there were rules and regulations to follow which helped both village people and local staff to work with clarity and efficiency.

Thirdly, KK strove to muster support for its programs and ensure their widespread acceptability. For these reasons it tried to engage a wide variety of stakeholders and influential people in its village based work. For example, it routinely invited government departments, imams, journalists and politicians to school functions, TBA training certification and other events. This helped in removing apprehensions and provided a sense of legitimacy for its work.

Fourthly, KK tried to ensure that all its work was high quality. The involvement and empowerment of local people through the various committees helped in this respect. So too did KK's policies and procedures, its monitoring visits and the

involvement of outsiders and government professionals in the verification and inspection of its work.

Lastly, KK continuously tried to build the capacity of the various village based groups. The intention was that this effort combined with the links it was able to make between the groups and outside organizations would mean that the work was sustainable and would continue after KK left.

The next chapter gives the results and achievements of the action research.

Chapter 13

2003-2007 What was achieved?

Introduction

As has been seen the project did not work out exactly as had been predicted in the MA. The extraordinary events, pressures, needs, demands and circumstances forced KK to act very swiftly. Even to survive as a woman's organization in FATA it had to operate at different levels, including in its work the village, government line departments, the security agencies, politicians and radical political parties. It had to learn how to relate to problems, such as shortage of water, of which it had no previous experience. It had to take on board its donors for resources and support. By being able to do these things it learnt lessons that will help the organization in its future work in FATA.

All this, however, is not to say that the organization achieved results. This chapter describes the outcomes of KK's four and a half years' work, attempting to apply the principles drawn from the MA study in 2002, in selected areas of FATA. The first part of the chapter discusses what appear to be the intangible benefits of this work. It argues that the project has laid the ground for an expansion of gender based sustainable developmental projects in FATA. The second part discusses the physical targets achieved in education, health and other sectors.

The Intangible Outcomes

As discussed in chapter 4 FATA is a most conservative tribal society where patriarchy is deeply entrenched. Women in FATA do not have any significant standing socially, politically, economically or in their family. It is not easy to reach females and implement projects in their name and targeted towards their development in a society where even mentioning female names in public is difficult.

Male staff in KK are influenced by this general climate. Many have confessed that they had joined KK (Sister's Home) as their second choice due to a lack of employment opportunities. In the beginning of their career with KK they would shy away from mentioning that they were working for a women's NGO. Even so friends and family members might ask them 'How are you sister? Is everything alright at your home?'

However, after working for a while, their perspective changed. A male CF once remarked:

> 'In the beginning we thought it was not real and so took it as a means to earn money. We wondered how working for women's development among the tribal communities could be possible. But now I am myself changed. I know the injustices being done to females and can talk about these. Also when I go home, I don't demand for food. I feel how overworked and oppressed the women already are, so just go and help myself. My mother once remarked, 'Hopefully this Khwendo Kor is not turning you into a female. Can't you find some manly job? You can't even ask your wife to heat food for you.''

These changes in attitude were not confined to KK staff. Despite severe difficulties and risks KK has shown that people, including men in powerful positions, can be mobilized around this agenda without undermining theirs. For example, the decision to open a school in a village is traditionally one taken by a *malik* and on his initiative. However, KK did things the other way around. It put female education and development at the center of everything else and mobilized people and *maliks* around it.

The achievements of KK in this project were first that it pioneered the agenda of women's development in FATA and survived; second that it prepared the ground for other NGOs who could benefit from its work; third and most importantly, that it

enabled the local people to take a key role in their own development, and fourth that it led to certain more tangible achievements.

Surviving: the movement from hatred to tolerance

In 2003/4 KK was facing failure in FATA. The most obvious sign of this was that it was forced to leave many of the villages in which it was working. It is therefore an achievement that despite this huge, initial opposition KK has been able to function in an increasing number of villages. In 2007 it is working actively in three areas of FATA namely, FR Bannu, and the agencies of Khyber and Bajaur. The total number of villages where KK is directly interacting with village women and men and actively implementing projects of female education and development is thirty five. Among these sixteen villages are in FR Bannu and Khyber agency each, while its work in Bajaur is going on in three villages.

It is important that this involvement has not been achieved at the cost of a compromise over what KK considers to be its key values and goals. Negotiations and consultations in these villages have been transparent. KK has tried to be clear about what it is aiming to do, its methods, its sources of funding and what it can and cannot do. The most contentious and sensitive issues have been raised. For example KK has raised the subject of physical and verbal attacks on itself and local women in discussions with religious leaders and representatives of the Taliban. In these meetings KK would ask for evidence that it had acted against Islam.

This dialogue seems slowly to be bearing fruit. The FATA Regional Manager recently emailed me as follows:

> 'I come across such *Maliks*, Taliban and other hard liners who had been aggressively opposing us but who are somehow quiet now. I invited some of them to our office for meetings and informal discussions about starting work again in their area but they said: "We have in the past so openly campaigned against you that we are known for this. How can we eat our own words and

> what are people going to think about us? You carry on with your work and wait.'

The strongest evidence for these changes comes from applications from villages to KK. The progress report for October-December 2006 on page 5 discusses the selection of new villages for further work from among a number of applications. It says:

> 'The 6 selected villages among 7 in FR Bannu are those villages where KK was expelled and not allowed to enter in these villages in 2003. Now the Taliban who are the most opponent showed interest in KK's educational activities, so the local people requested KK to support them especially in the education sector.'

In a very recent meeting the representative of the local Bannu Taliban said:

> 'We the Taliban are specifically working with the mission of peace and *Jihad* against those who are working against Islam and violating the values of Islam in the area. After knowing and questioning KK program they appreciated the efforts of Khwendo Kor of development, especially the health and education initiatives in the area. He further ensures his and his organization support in implementing of KK programs.' (Minutes of meeting at Bannu office on 4th of May 2007)

Creation of a Conducive Environment for Development Agencies

Much of the hostility towards KK was based on a general mistrust and hatred against NGOs and their western donors. Khwendo Kor has tried to bridge this gap. Representatives of donors, NGOs and government departments visit KK for information and documentation about the area, the problems, the resources and the people. Khwendo Kor has also invited donors' representatives to go with the KK team members to the villages, to participate in the discussions at the regional levels

with representatives of the radical religious political parties and politicians, and to be part of discussions with the government departments. This has provided opportunities for developing understanding and a certain level of tolerance for each other and for breaking down myths about FATA and its people.

The formation of KACC has mustered further support for KK's and other NGOs work beyond the NGO jurisdiction. For example, one member of KACC has been elected as a Nazim (Administrator) at the union council level. In a KACC meeting (Minutes of 15th of September 2005) he advocated:

> 'coordination meetings between GOs {government organizations}and NGOs for filling the gap and developing mutual understanding about how we can support each other. He mentioned that community is unaware due to the low education, having severe need of improving infrastructure, specially where KK is working. He suggests and offers his and his organization's services in this regard in partnership with KK. He also took the responsibility of allowing KK to present their progress during district assembly session and meant that this will be a step towards effective collaboration and support seeking mechanism from local government in the context of KK.'

My belief is that NGOs intending to work in FATA are now in a much better position to access communities for developmental projects because tribal people, both women and men, are more familiar with this kind of work and are better organized and more receptive. Also, they know the strengths and weaknesses of each other.

Capacity Building of Village based Men, women and Children

The whole concentration of KK's village based work is on building the capacity of local people. All the people in the village, women and men, *maliks* and religious leaders, are encouraged to initiate and take part in the development of their village. They are helped to identify the problems themselves and develop a vision and plans

for their own villages. They are encouraged to undertake all village based activities themselves. The role of KK is to help them form village organizations and interest groups and pool their strengths and energies for individual and communal development.

The final aim is to enable them to manage these developments without the help of KK. Once they achieve a certain level of maturity they are linked to the various local registration authorities such as the social welfare department and the Community Citizen Boards. (C. C. Bs) and encouraged to get themselves registered. Training and exposure to similar work elsewhere is designed to lead them to a level where they can take developmental projects from government and other NGOs. At this point they may also enter into contractual arrangements with KK which specifies the roles of each in undertaking and managing projects.

An extract from the Progress Report, April-June 2004 shows that the social organizations were already progressing at the earliest stages of KK's interventions.

> 'Meeting took place with Community Empowerment, BADP (Barani Area Development Project) contracted NGO, for linking KK target communities and to address their immediate need of water, sanitation etc. The NGO responsible officer showed his interest and demanded for registration of COs. As the COs are not registered under social welfare act 1960. So the team along with community activist met with district social welfare officer. Social welfare officer advised to initiate the process of Registration in the month of July as he informed that the department is overburdened and cannot do registration till June.'

As described in more detail later many such village based organizations are starting to take on and implement projects for own villages. They have better understanding of developmental issues and their experience has given them skills and confidence. The January-March 2005 Progress Report says:

> 'The women and men organizations of Sardi Khel, Khairaki Mama Khel and Tarkhoba Kalan submitted their need for TBA training, skill center for women, ID cards for women and men. Khaski Sardi Khel, 2 cluster organizations of Khairaki Mama Khel realized the importance and need of registering their organization under CCB. They were facilitated by KK and established linkage with SWD, Bannu. The three men organization developed their constitution and got CCBs names from SWD, Bannu as Zia CCB, Hamza CCB and Hayat CCB. Hamza CCB of Kaski Sardi Khel got registration while the rest of the two registrations are in process. Khairaki Mama Khel has also initiated the process for registration under Societies Act 1860 with Industrial Department Bannu and Peshawar.'

With growing confidence and support from the *maliks* and the village men's groups and organizations women have been increasingly keen to solve their own problems through their village based women's organizations. The January –March 2006 progress report says:

> 'The women of 2 WO demanding for water supply schemes in their village. KK social organizer took up the issue and introduced KK program in detail to mobilize them for solving such issue on self-help basis. As a result the women raised Rs. 2000/- as donation from 6 persons of the village and purchase pipe to extend water supply from the near by home inside the village. The organization also agreed and took initiative for Gender based registration and planned to prepare ID cards for all women of the organization.'

Numbers Involved in Social Organization

A key difference between KK's working approach in FATA as against NWFP relates to its method of entry to the villages. In the adjacent NWFP villages KK would work on starting a school once it was clear that there was a need and that some local people were prepared to support one. The elders, fathers, mothers or close relatives of school going age girls would be mobilized around this school.

Once a school was functioning, and provided people wanted this, KK would expand to other activities such as developing a village organization, introducing health activities and so on.

However, in FATA it was totally the other way round. Despite acute and felt needs and deprivation everywhere, and the willingness of the activists in the selected villages KK could not start its education work without gaining confidence of broader community. In fact in FATA KK learnt that it was important not to start with a girls' school first but to gain people's confidence, and listen to and practically pursue their priorities. In the course of this it was also possible lay the ground for doing things for girls and female education and development.

Therefore in FATA the community mobilization and social organization of people around their various interests became the entry point. The following give figures for the numbers involved in such activities in FR Bannu and the Khyber agency. The figures were supplied by the two Regional Managers and apply either to the situation at that date (e.g. the number of women and involved in the organizations) or to activities undertaken since the start of the project (e.g. the number of water supply schemes undertaken). The smaller numbers in the Khyber agency reflect, at least in part, the later date on which work started there.

In FR Bannu

1. 174 women and 360 men is working for their respective village development in 10 women and 14 men village based organization. They have accumulated donated funds of Rupees 3070 and 22390 saving by WO and MOS respectively.
2. 137 women and 224 men of village based women and men organization capacitated in social organization, organization development, gender and civil rights and governance issues.
3. 4 Men organizations registered as CCBs while one village based women and men organization registered as gender based CBO under society act 1860.

4. Bank account are opened by 4 CCB and one CBO to support their organization in implementing of development project and to keep organization funds in these accounts.
5. Khwendo Kor has entered into a partnership contract with 8 MO to implement hardware project in their areas.
6. 5 water supply schemes, 4 street pavements, 5 bridges and 2 protection Bund project implemented in partnership with community organizations to address the immediate needs and to mobilize local community towards women development programs.
7. 16 influential media representatives, village *maliks*, local government representatives are working to support KK activities in the area under the name of Khwendo Kor area Coordination committee (KACC). KACC consist of male and female joint forum where 3 female is also working.
8. 238 women and 1500 men of target villages are mobilized and supporting KK activities as a result of on going mobilization campaigns, sessions and meetings with community.
9. 5 Community activists are capacitated and involved in Child message collection activity.'

In the Khyber agency

1 '12 women organization (144 women) and 15 men organizations (225) working for their respective villages.
2 144 women and 225 men of village based women and men organization capacitated in series of social organization training.
3 10 influential, *Maliks*, journalists, and government representative are active members of KACC. which comprises 2 women and 8 men.'

Education

Since its inception provision of village based girls education is one of the most important sectors of KK. Presently just under 2500 girls are getting basic education in KK's supported schools, as shown in the following table for NWFP and FATA.

Table 13.1 Total number of KK CBS {Community Based Schools} & ALCs {Adult literacy centers} that KK is managing now (2007)

	CBS			ALCs	
S#	No. of CBS	Enrollment		No. of ALCs	Enrollment
		Girls	Boys		
1	78	2364	591	15	309

The following tables shows the details on female education for FR Bannu, Khyber and Bajaur agencies.

Table 13.2 Total number of Khwendo Kor Community Based Schools in FATA with gender based enrollment in KK

Agency	Provision	N	Enrollment		Total
			Female	Male	
Bannu	CBS	14	355	205	560
Bannu	ALC	3	60	0	60
Khyber	CBS	9	370	0	370
Khyber	ALC	3	72	0	72
Khyber	CBLC	8	288	160	448
Bajaur	CBS	3	126	29	155
All	All	40	1271	394	1665

Health

The main activities in KK's health program are training of TBAs, organizing medical camps, collaboration with government's health department, health awareness sessions and vaccination campaigns.

The following give examples of the activity in this area in FR Bannu in June 2007.

Since the start of the project:

1. 48 women have been trained as TBA in 6 villages.
2. KK trained TBAs have conducted 158 successful deliveries and referred 33 complicated cases to government hospitals for further treatment.
3. KK trained TBAs have delivered 32 sessions to village women and educated 600 women on gynecological, viral and seasonal diseases.
4. 108 women and 101 children have been vaccinated against tetanus and measles in 5 vaccination camps organized in collaboration with health department.
5. 1858 women and 1347 children have been given awareness against seasonal, gynecological and viral disease along with preventive measure against these diseases in 113 health awareness session and 3 health awareness campaigns.
6. 1976 women, 779 children and 468 men have been treated and given free medicines in 7 free medical camps, 5 free eye camps and 2 antenatal camps organized in collaboration with health department Bannu, LRH hospital Peshawar and Al-Shifa eye hospital Kohat.
7. 185 chronic patients have been referred for further treatment in government hospital for further treatment.
8. 15 villages (approximate population 15000) have benefited from anti mosquito spray campaigns organized in collaboration with health department.
9. The TBAs have been capacitated on symbolic and pictorial methodology of record keeping.

The comparable figures for Khyber agency are:

1. 67 women trained as TBA in 4 villages.

2. KK trained TBAs conducted 87 successful deliveries and referred 90 complicated cases to government hospitals for further treatment.
3. 101 children vaccinated against polio in Govt. school of Khyber Agency
4. 20-health sessions have been given to 450 women to make them aware of different health issues including hygiene, hepatitis, diarrhea etc.

Capacity Building-Income Generation

KK has been providing monetary services under its Micro Enterprise development program in the NWFP villages. So far activities related to this sector are limited to skills training.

Since the start of the project in FR Bannu:

- 127 women have been capacitated in Tie and dye, Food processing and making of *Mazari* products in 9 training sessions.
- 152 women are currently learning sewing, cutting and embroidery skills in 4 women's vocational centers in 4 villages.
- 80 women have been made aware of micro enterprise and Islamic mode of financing by delivery of 6 awareness sessions.
- Manager Bank of Khyber has given sessions to male members of the community and KK staff on Islamic mode of financing.
- There is a growing demand for a micro-enterprise program under Islamic mode of financing.

100 boys and 71girls skill was enhanced through tailoring & making decoration pieces training in Khyber agency. There is also a demand in Khyber agency for a micro-enterprise program.

Advocacy

Advocacy oriented work such as coalition building and raising voices on human rights issues is an important and emerging field of work in KK. The organization is evolving its village based work on the basis that education, health and access to livelihood are human rights which apply to all.

In FR Bannu

- District government has banned corporal punishment in school .
- FR Community has planned series of activities to repeal FCR after a seminar held on the issue.
- 30 committed youth organized 2 youth network at the FR level with the aim to work for peace, humanity and development in the area.
- Initial trainings were given to these networks and an action plan was developed during the training.
- 214 women and 208 men facilitated in getting CNIC by organizing 3 ID card development camps in collaboration with NADRA. These women and men register with district election office in the voter list.
- One KACC member trained and announced by human rights organization as district human rights attorney and he did free cases for 3 females in providing their rights in the court of district and session [in] Bannu.
- National and international days i.e. IWD, Labor Day etc celebrated at community level so that there is awareness in the community of the rights of women etc.
- In about 10 villages the population is aware of the negative impacts of FCR on local people and they plan to work against it.
- Local Taliban and religious leaders involved in KK program and they are cooperating with KK as in FR area most of the teacher appointed on the recommendation of religious leaders and they are *Hafiz-e-Quran*.

In the Khyber agency

- Seminar and workshops were arranged on child labor and child rights.
- National and international days celebrated at community level so that the community is aware of the rights of women etc.
- Training was arranged for 60 religious people of Khyber agency on Child rights, importance of Female Education, corporal punishment etc. These People have actively participated the workshops and seminars organized by KK in Khyber Agency.

Work with Other Organizations, Government and NGOs.

As described in the last chapter KK realized very early on that it would not be able cater for all the needs and demands of the tribal communities. It also decided that it would not build parallel service delivery structures to those of the government. Instead it would aim to strengthen the available government departments by linking these to the village based women and men's organizations with which KK has been working. The creation of links with other departments is therefore a cross cutting theme in all KK' activities.

The following extract from the progress report, October-December 2006 shows the diversity of the organizations KK has accessed in seeking to meet the very diverse needs of the people in the villages where it works.

- 'Net working and linkages Meeting with Government and Non Governmental Organizations (EDO health, Medical superintendent, EDO education, Literacy coordinator, Agency Education officer, social welfare officer, Barani area development project, Miryan youth council, Community Uplift Program, District Child rights committee, STAR NGO for support in intervention at field level and to make it sustainable.
- Health department extended support in vaccination camp, free medical camp and provided doctors and LHV for the camps and health inspector for final evaluation of TBA training and certification of trained TBAs.

- Education department deputed female education officer for final examination of 6 KK supported community based schools.
- Literacy Coordinator deputed female inspector and evaluated women adult learner of Kotka Babar after completion of one-year course and certified the learners.
- Agency Education officer signed Memorandum of understanding and enter into partnership for establishment of a computer center at FR area.
- Miryan youth council principally agreed to extend their support in providing course books to poor students of KK supported community based girls primary schools.
- The NGOs and CB NGOs working in Bannu and FR Bannu and local elected representatives participating in KK programs at field and office level.
- Social welfare department extended support in opening of bank account for Community based women organization.
- All the government and civil society organization inviting KK in their programs at district level.
- KACC members involved in approving 4 projects to community organization and signed the contract with them.
- KK area coordination committee meeting, partnership building and involvement of all stakeholders in KK program
- National commission for human development Karak extended support in delivering Gender training for KK partner communities at FR Bannu.
- Institute of Research and Development studies (IRDS) Peshawar facilitated 3 days Organization development training to KK partner men organization at Bannu.'

There is little doubt that by working closely with all these governmental and non-governmental organizations KK has developed a very positive reputation at the local level.

Quality of Work

The aim of the study was to see if an NGO could introduce into FATA a development program designed for the benefit of women and children and focusing on education. The answer to this is clearly 'yes'. Khwendo Kor is still in FATA and is very active there.

There is less evidence on the quality of the work that is being done. Outside FATA there is evidence that the quality of KK's work is indeed high. For example, in Dir the government delayed publishing the results of its examinations since the top seven places were all taken by pupils from KK schools rather than government ones. Since the system applied in FATA is essentially the same as that in Dir it is to be hoped that the quality is similarly high there. So far, however, we have not been able to get comparable statistics for FATA, so evidence is lacking.

Further statistical work on quality may well be needed. For the moment the best that can be done is to illustrate the kind of results at which KK aims through case studies of which two follow.

Case Study No-1

Ms. Sipara Bibi is a resident of Tarkhoba Kalan. Her husband Mohammad Rauf is a farmer. She has 2 Sons and one daughter. Ms. Sipara is member of village education committee Tarkhoba Kalan FR Bannu. She is illiterate but has a positive attitude towards education. In a community report (2007) she says:

> 'I am very happy with the performance of my daughter reading in KK supported community based school. She is more competent than my son reading in boys' government school. Community based school teacher is loving student and teaching in games and interesting way. The teacher is not using stick for punishment. So my daughter is always sharing her teacher lovely attitude and learned stories and games. Despite of my illiteracy I also

learnt the name of animals, fruits etc in English as my daughter always repeating it in the home.'

Case Study No 2.

'11 years Asima D/O of Niaz is a student of class 2 reading at Action Aid supported community based girls primary school at village Kotka Babar FR Bannu. She has 4 brothers and 1 sister. She is very intelligent and got 2nd position in the annual exams. She is also actively and confidently participating in extra curriculum activities during celebration of national and international days. She picks things [up] quickly and utilizes the learning in her day to day life. Before establishing of the school her parents were not giving importance to her education. When her mother became member of village education committee she stressed to send her daughter to school. Ms. Asima says, 'My parents are not very much interested in my education but last days when God saved the life of my brother for being stopping my mother in feeding expired medicines she always caring me and asking about my schooling and regularly visiting the school and mobilizing other mothers to send their daughter to school.' She further shared the story how she learn about the knowledge of expired medicines. She says, "One day one of my class mates was absent from school due to vomiting because of taking expired medicine. So my teacher teach us the days, months and year names and told that each medicine had expiry date on the packing with Mfg date and expiry period. When my mother was giving medicines to my younger brother I picked the medicine and noticed the date on it and forbade my mother of the expired medicine usage. So every one now is realizing in my family how education is important in day to day life especially for women.'' (KK Progress report, April –June 2006)

My belief is that these case studies illustrate the principles that are followed in KK's educational program and the kind of success it has. I accept, however, that further evidence of this is needed.

Conclusion

The tribal communities are deprived and inaccessible. Geography, lack of security and lack of infrastructure and development projects have left the people isolated. The old tribal and colonial systems govern all aspects of life whether political, social, economic, or judicial. By reaching these communities, and in particular the women among them, and intervening and mobilizing communities around own needs and interest groups, and facilitating them to take their own small initiatives KK has actually provided them with alternatives and options side by side with the traditional ones. Their exposure to and links with the line departments, officials, other NGOs and donors have been opening new avenues for their own development.

In summary, despite the difficulties and risks, the teams worked hard and with the conviction they were doing the right thing. With the cooperation and support of numerous well wishers at all levels including donors, village people, and government functionaries, KK has been able to be fairly successful both at strategic and operational levels.

Chapter 14

Overall Conclusion

Introduction

The key aim of the action research was to implement a viable and sustainable women and children's development project in FATA. This final chapter summarizes the research. It describes the problems of FATA and its people, women in particular, the risks encountered while undertaking the research and the strategies adopted to counter these. The lessons learned form the basis for a set of principles which are given towards the end of the chapter. However successful the project may have been, it could only make a small contribution to resolving the problems it set out to tackle. So the final section discusses the challenges that remain and the way forward.

Background to the Action Research

As a tribal woman I had experienced discrimination myself. The action research essentially originated from this personal interest. There were, however, other solid reasons for undertaking the study: the dearth of research about tribal women and their poverty and humiliating social position. All this was reinforced by the tribal interpretation of Islam, the historical and geopolitical context of FATA, and the current focus on the war on terror. I felt that there was much that needed to be understood and changed.

The action research was undertaken by the NGO Khwendo Kor. This organization implements female education and development projects within the basic framework of Islam. It is sensitive to the local culture. It was keen to see if it could help with the development of Muslim tribal women so that they can take their place in a modern world.

The case for the project is supported by international conventions such as CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All kinds of Discrimination Against Women) and EFA (Education For All) to which Pakistan is a signatory. It is also important that under the constitution of Pakistan, basic education is a human right ensured to all citizens without any discrimination of gender, creed and race while in Islam education is mandatory for both females and males equally.

An initial survey of the literature on other developing countries also provided reassurance that female education could play an important part in eliminating gender disparities, eradicating poverty, and improving family and national health. More generally it could also lead to women's personal development and societal growth. Despite many apprehensions and difficulties NGOs have been playing a significant role in this respect.

Against this background the research used techniques primarily developed in and for fairly stable western societies in the very different situation and culture of FATA. It involved two main perspectives – those of action research and the case study. The War on Terror means that the situation in FATA changes rapidly and the overall research strategy had to be unfolding and dynamic. The stance was ethnographic. As a researcher, I was not only involved in the action but also sought to look at things from the point of view of those being researched before moving back to make a more detached assessment.

The methods used were multiple and designed to serve the varying needs of the research. They included a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. The methods were also participatory and empowering and engaged both KK staff and the tribal communities. Thus village women found telling their life stories a helpful way of expressing their difficulties and aspirations. The PRA tools helped both KK and the groups of village women and men to analyze individual and collective needs and to prioritize strategies for meeting them.

The varied methods of the study and the quantity of data and ideas they generated have not made this an easy thesis to write up. Moreover the dangers of the project and my multiple roles as researcher, tribal woman and chief executive have made it difficult to achieve the necessary detachment. I believe, however, that I have achieved a fair account of the problems we faced and the results achieved.

The Context of the Research

FATA is mountainous, isolated, and diverse. Its population is scattered, poor and lacking in human and economic resources. Its strategic geopolitical position has made it a focus for invaders and it has a long history of resistance against external forces including the British. In this context the policy of consecutive governments both before and after independence has been one of collusion with the tribal chiefs via the institution of the political agent in order to control the tribes.

In this process the needs of the vast majority of the tribal population have been ignored. Poverty is widespread in FATA. More than two thirds of tribal people are below the government of Pakistan's official poverty line. The main reasons of this situation are attributed to the historical and administrative factors. The poor agricultural and natural resource base, remoteness and poor policy framework have exacerbated the poverty of the area.

The ongoing conflict has added to the miseries of an already poverty stricken tribal people. Tribal conflicts, the porous border with Afghanistan, the present war on terrorism, the growing power of the Taliban, and the lack of state institutions have made FATA a lawless place. Weapons abound. Smuggling is profitable. FATA as whole is a haven for criminals and religious radicals.

Culturally the area is Islamic. Islam is deeply rooted in the lives of ordinary people and it permeates all aspects of life. It is also highly politicized. Though all other political parties are banned in FATA the radical religious parties are extremely powerful and active and their influence is everywhere widespread. They are closely

linked to the Taliban. The political parties, the Taliban and the ordinary people interpret Islam in a way that reinforces the severe discrimination against tribal women.

Women in FATA are entangled in vicious circle of tribal norms and customs, exemplified in the traditions of *swara*, bride price and exchange marriages. Poverty interacts with the low social status of women in multi-dimensional ways and in all spheres of their life. Being females they are largely denied freedom of movement, ownership of productive assets, and the right to make decisions and express their opinions in their families or society. They face domestic violence, overwork and poor health. As a result they tend to have low self esteem and confidence. Their identity is through their close male relatives who control their life.

The lack of basic services providing education, health and water has further worsened their quality of life. Even where the relevant services exist, women find it difficult to use them effectively. Government programs give women low priority. Professional women are very rare in FATA. A variety of cultural constraints make it difficult for women to access services even when these are available. They are burdened with the work of bringing water to their families. They remain illiterate and they lack treatment for the illnesses they have. They have little opportunity to generate income.

My MA thesis identified these issues and suggested that the project I proposed would not be easy. Security issues, the rigid tribal culture and the geographical inaccessibility of FATA would make the work difficult and dangerous. NGOs were funded by western donors and so widely seen as representing western culture and agendas. An NGO intending to work for tribal women's education and development would almost certainly face resistance.

Nevertheless the argument of the thesis was not entirely pessimistic. Education could be an effective means for helping women in developing countries. The lack of services provided an opportunity for an NGO. The tribal culture, like any other in

the world, was not single dimensional, homogeneous and static; rather it varied geographically, it evolved, it had good features as well as bad. There should be places where the project might work, individuals who would work with it and strengths on which it could be build. In seeking out such places it would be essential to take account of the existing power structures, the *maliks*, the religious leaders, the FATA administration and so on. Given such an approach a successful and sustainable intervention should be possible.

The Action Research

In the light of my MA study, I began preparation for the action research. I had discussions with friends, relatives and direct family members, secured funds from donors and ensured that KK fully understood the FATA context and owned the decision to work there. Two areas were selected from FATA and the necessary institutional arrangements were made. Visits were made to many potential villages. Meetings were held with important people in FATA, officials from the political administration and government line departments, *maliks* and activists from the selected areas.

My work with the ADB and research undertaken by KK confirmed that FATA was not homogenous. In some villages people were very welcoming and receptive to the idea of female education and development, whereas in others there was strong resistance to it. Spaces for such projects existed. However, we also realized that female education alone would not be sufficient to secure acceptance without tangible benefits such as jobs for the local people. We were also warned that the security issues were more serious than expected.

The villages selected were those which fitted KK's criteria of need and were prepared to collaborate in its work. Good communication skills were necessary if KK staff were to develop rapport with the *maliks* , village influential elders and men. This was crucial not only to involve them but also to get their permission to interact with the local women and men in the PRA exercises. These were conducted

separately with groups of women and men and facilitated their active engagement in identifying and prioritizing their own problems and strategies for solutions.

Both men and women identified common problems over poverty, water and health. However, women suffered more. For example, they had to carry heavy pitchers of water from far away places and faced harassment on their way while bringing it. Women also had less access to education, health services and credit within and outside their villages. In contrast to the women the *maliks* and the men's groups asked for help over electricity supply, irrigation channels and repeal of the FCR where KK did not have expertise. This was explained to them. Nevertheless, the *maliks* enjoyed enormous power and the organization needed to keep them on its side.

In line with the preliminary study KK expected to encounter problems over security and opposition from religious leaders and *maliks*. However, the initial visits to the villages showed that changes in the international and national political scenario had led to a shift of power and resources from conventional structures to the Taliban. The latter had gained influence in all spheres of life including the political, religious and social. Their power was partly based on their willingness to use force and partly on the services they provided in mediating disputes among warring tribes and in the rehabilitation of drug addicts. They exerted their authority through the traditional institutions of mosques and *jirga*s.

The Taliban exhibited and used their power against those whom they suspected of disagreeing with their views. KK did not expect this and faced severe difficulties. *Jirga*s were called, *fatwas* were issued and mosques and local media were engaged in propaganda against the work of KK which was projected as un-Islamic. The military operations elsewhere and in Waziristan exacerbated the situation. KK was repeatedly under attack by the extremists. Explosives were planted in its offices and shots were fired at vehicles carrying female staff. As a result, some *maliks* and government officials who had previously been very co-operative withdrew their

support for KK, many female staff left the organization. It had to stop its work in many villages and several schools were closed.

After an attack on its vehicle in which two staff were severely wounded KK analyzed the situation and came to two main conclusions: that work in some villages was possible and that it had to work harder for its acceptance as an organization. As a result, it continued its work in the villages where it had support. It also made a particular effort to understand the relationship between the *maliks* and the Taliban and the power each was able to exert. It expanded and diversified its support base by including journalists, the religious leaders and other NGOs. The KK Area Coordination Committee was formed consisting of membership from these groups of people to support its work. It hired skilled tribal local people and provided all staff, including the drivers, with mobile phones for security purposes. It strengthened its relationships with all government departments including the ones responsible for security and would keep them informed of its activities and movements.

At the community level KK had to find ways of addressing the enormous needs of people, women in particular, in the villages where work continued. Village based committees were formed around different interests such as water and health and were linked to other organizations including the relevant government departments. KACC organized forums on repeal of FCR and other issues and religious leaders were invited to events and functions. All these efforts helped in developing a better understanding and acceptance for KK's work. They also enabled KK to concentrate on the areas where it had expertise while enabling the villagers to meet other needs through its links with other organizations.

Principles

A number of key principles underlay this work.

1. It was essential that staff at all levels of the organization own the program, an aim reinforced by a decentralized management system backed by training

2. It was even more important that the program was 'owned' by local people including women, who were involved in key activities such as the selection and monitoring of staff and whose capacity was increased by training and exposure to other groups
3. In order to achieve this ownership it was essential to listen and respond to local people, allowing them to define the needs, collaborating with them where KK had the expertise and linking them to others where it did not
4. All the projects used KK's well established systems and procedures which helped both village people and local staff to work with clarity and efficiency
5. The use of external and government monitors reinforced the role of these procedures in ensuring that the quality of the work was high.
6. KK sought to engage all important stakeholders such as the government departments, imams, journalists and politicians in its village based work by inviting them to school functions, TBA training certification and other events.

These principles concerned what KK did. Others concerned the way it did it. Its practice was Islamic and, as far as possible, culturally sensitive. It was deliberately non-partisan, unallied to any political party, but willing to work with any who shared its objectives. It was flexible and non-confrontational, working where this was possible and withdrawing when it was not. It sought to be transparent about its aims and sources of funding. It tried to share responsibility and in this way to foster trust and inter-dependence.

There are certain pre-requisites to working in this way. There has to be a will to do so particularly at the top of the organization. There has to be an understanding of the context and of any relevant research. There have to be adequate human and financial resources. The staff must be skilled and have the relevant techniques, for example in the tools of PRA. The management, systems and procedures must be good. The organization must have the links and donors it needs.

By working in this way KK was able to reduce but not eliminate risks and resistance. No one can work in FATA in complete safety. Moreover the risks fluctuate with the political situation. Nevertheless even the Taliban found it hard to object to an Islamic organization which was not controlled by the government and where the staff would, if need arose, wear a *Burqa*. More importantly the style of work generated commitment to KK from the local people and this was furthered by KK's policy of hiring local staff and supporting the local economy. The commitment of local people almost certainly influenced the Taliban who are linked to them through family ties and dependent on them for their influence.

A further important feature of the approach was the alliances KK was able to create. These alliances were not political but nevertheless helped politically when KK was under attack. They helped KK to press for changes where its voice would otherwise not be heard. They helped the villagers to achieve developments such as new bridges which KK did not have the expertise or resources to provide. They enabled the KK projects themselves to survive as when the government provides independent recognition or funding for schools or community groups.

The consequence of this way of working can be seen in a number of outcomes. These included:

- Viability – The project survived. KK is now working in three areas, villages from which it is ejected are asking for its return, and there are agreements with the local Taliban
- Productivity – schools have been created, pupils educated and health schemes introduced
- Empowerment – the groups founded by KK have largely survived, are working and have in some cases achieved an independent status
- Sustainability – the ability of the groups and policy of seeking to integrate and accredit the schools, teachers and TBAs with the local government departments strongly suggest that the developments will be sustainable

- Attitude – women are working in new ways and hence there is a new view of what might be possible for them

Challenges for the future

FATA is inaccessible, insecure, deprived, culturally backward and badly governed. Faced with such problems projects such as the one I have described can make only a very limited contribution. If the situation of women in FATA is to improve in any fundamental way, there must, I believe, be changes in three major areas:

1) The use of Islam
2) The role of civil society
3) The government's political will.

Use of Islam

We have seen that Islam has enormous influence on the lives of tribal people. But it is interpreted according to tribal customs and traditions which discriminate against women. It is also extensively used for political purposes and for supporting wars. As the power of the Taliban grows, Islam is used more aggressively and women are more restricted. The local institutions which produce scholars and religious leaders are in the control of a few radical political parties and based upon a centuries old curriculum. Ordinary people, women in particular, are almost totally illiterate and ignorant. They cannot challenge the interpretation of Islam they are given.

Nevertheless, the action research showed that Islam was at the centre of the negotiations between KK and the *maliks*, ordinary men and radical Taliban. KK continuously argued that Islam gave women equal right to education; that KK was using the government's curriculum which is Islamic and could be checked by any one; that the pursuit of knowledge was mandatory in Islam. After several rounds of talks, the Taliban cross checked KK's systems and staff. Despite knowing KK had western donors' money, and only after imposing some additional conditions, they agreed that KK could open schools in the areas under their control.

As I have said, the contribution of the action research was small when compared with the hugeness of the problems in FATA. Unless efforts are made on a larger scale and for a longer period these successes could easily be submerged by tribal customs and the Taliban philosophy. Therefore there is a need for continuous research on women's rights in Islamic ideology and for its wide and aggressive dissemination among ordinary people and women in particular. The faith which has so far been used to deprive them of their basic rights could be equally used to get these back. For this it is necessary to wrest control of the interpretation of Islam through the spread of mainstream modern education from an Islamic perspective.

The Role of Civil Society

Pakistan is under military rule. It lacks a vibrant civil society. This is particularly true of FATA which is generally deprived of institutions whether state or civil. FATA is isolated and remote and lacks models of civil society. It is lawless so that it is dangerous for staff to work there. Powerful and close knit tribal families do not wish to yield any influence to NGOs. The colonial system did not permit them. Lack of familiarity and suspicions of foreign influence have led to strong opposition to NGOs generally in Pakistan but particularly in FATA. This opposition is further fuelled by the extremist religious political parties anxious to keep their power. The influence of these parties is particularly strong in FATA.

Irrespective of such difficulties the emerging civil society is faced with daunting problems. NGOs largely depend upon funding from western donors. They often have limited capacity and they often have problems over governance and management. Many reach few people; many have difficulties in raising funds; their services lack official recognition and thus credibility with the local population, their projects often do not last after their own work stops. Many NGOs in Pakistan are dependent on a particular leader.

The NGOs working on gender issues face even greater difficulties. There is a shortage of female professionals. Trained members of staff are often lost to

international NGOs and the UN organizations. During the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan foreign aid agencies sometimes offered KK staff ten times the salaries they received at KK. Local NGOs compete for limited funding sources and so lack solidarity. The corruption in government and society in general can also be seen in NGOs that are formed by the close friends and relatives of senior government officials in order to siphon off government money.

Despite all these problems the NGOs have shown they can withstand the challenges and established their credibility in many ways. They have performed better than government departments in the areas of human rights, relief work, health and education. They are closer to the ordinary people, flexible and capable of reaching people in remote and difficult areas. They have been successful in raising contentious issues and influencing policies in favour of ordinary people. As a result their role has been increasingly recognized.

An active civil society brings the issues of ordinary people to the attention of those who make policy and ensures that these needs are taken seriously. This has never happened in FATA. Civil society in FATA needs a more favourable environment so that it can take on the issues of women and children on a wider scale. Clear policy statements, an appropriate legal framework and reliable budgetary allocation by the government could play a huge role in strengthening civil society in FATA.

Political will

The failures of consecutive governments at federal and provincial levels have allowed the tribal people to live a medieval life. The 60 years since independence have clearly shown a lack of political will to change the situation in FATA. It remains a lawless, politically unstable, economically and socially deprived area. This neglect has manifested itself in the form of poverty, illiteracy, crime, extremism and the increased oppression of women. The lack of will to improve the plight of tribal women can be seen in government policies. These are not sensitive to the needs of fifty percent of the population of FATA. The latest FATA Sustainable Plan (2006) prepared by the Government of Pakistan does not explicitly

acknowledge the sufferings of tribal women. In this way it has clearly favoured the status quo.

Dominated by the interests of patriarchal power structures such as the *maliks*, political agents and radical extremist political parties, the government has shied away from changing the situation. It uses the excuses of Pushtun tribal culture, the history of FATA and the present war on terror as reasons for postponing the democratisation of FATA. There is an urgent need to integrate FATA into the mainstream legal and political system of Pakistan. In this process, however, the tribal people must not lose their identities and must continue to enjoy a substantial degree of self-government.

Overall the government must show its political will in the form of equity based, people friendly policies. These must be implemented with rigour and commitment at all levels. Without this the plight of tribal women will not change.

Final Recommendation

The central aim of this action research has been to benefit tribal women. In the course of the research it has been easy to lose sight of this goal. The process of development is complex; the difficulties, dangers and politics distracting. Many of the means adopted may not help women directly and are therefore only steps on the way. The key recommendation I would make is the one that I repeated to KK staff throughout. This is that the central vision is social change brought about by the development, education and empowerment of women. Whatever happens, it is essential that we do not lose sight of this goal.

Appendix 1

Minutes of the meeting
With Local Taliban/Religious leaders
Held on dated 04/05/2007

Meeting venue: Khwendo Kor Regional Office Bannu.

Participants.

1. Mr. Hayathulah Khan Community activist Barat.
2. Mr. Nizam-ud-Din Islamic *Madrassa* , Barat Bannu.
3. Mr. Mansoor, local Taliban leader
4. Mr. Zahidullah Aameer (President) peace committee Taliban Bannu.
5. Mr. Khalid Usman Regional Manager Khwendo Kor Bannu.

Proceeding of the meeting.

After detail introduction of KK and participants the Regional Manager linked this meeting with the previous community meeting on dated 18/04/2007 to coupe with the insecurity of community and development workers. Taliban leader Mr. Zahidullah Aameer peace committee Bannu declare that anyone who is involve in kidnapping and doing murders have no link with Taliban. He further mentioned that these are the people/criminals who have other agendas of earning money. We the Taliban are specifically working with the mission of peace and *Jihad* against those who are working against Islam and violating the values of Islam in the area. After knowing and questioning KK program they appreciated the efforts of Khwendo Kor of development especially the health and education initiatives in the area. He further ensures his and his organization support in implementing of KK programs. He did following commitments and advices while moving in the area and implementing of the program.

1. He commit that he would put KK on agenda of Taliban meeting in the next month and would inform his organization(Taliban) of the good work KK is doing and will communicate KK the strategy how to protect KK staff in the area.
2. He also commit that he will share the telephone numbers of 2-3 Taliban from each village so that KK can contact with them before visiting the concerned villages if needed.
3. Female staff should observe strict PARDA while moving in the area and avoid interaction with community men.
4. KK can involve us in their meetings regarding security and area development.
5. KK should temporarily avoid using their own vehicle in some areas like, Jani Khel, Bakka Khel and Mama Khel.

KK Regional Manager shared that they had planed to work on security and peace building in the area by implementing a project under the title

of integrating grassroots perspectives into conflict management. The participants showed interest for joint work with KK in implementing of this project if it is really contributing to peace building and strengthening of Islamic values in the region.

The meeting was ended with the commitment of joint work for peace and security in the area.

Khalid Usman
Regional Manager FR Bannu.

Abbreviations

AA Action Aid
ADB Asian Development Bank
AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALC Adult Literacy Centre
BADP Barani Area Development Project
BHU Basic Health Unit
CBGPS Community Based Girls Primary School
CBO Community Based Organisation
CBS Community Based Schools
CCB Community Citizen Board
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CF Community Facilitator
CFSO Community Facilitator Social Organization
CIA Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
CNIC Computerized National Identity Card
CSO Civil Society Organization
CT Certificate in Teaching
DA Development Area
EDO Education Development Office
EFA Education for All
EPI Expanded Program on Immunization
FATA Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR Frontier Crimes Regulations (Legal Framework for FATA dating from British rule)
FIA Federal Investigation Agency
FIR First Information Report
FR Federal Region
GO Government Organization
GoNWFP Government of North West Frontier Province
HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HID Human and Institutional Development
IB Intelligence Bureau
ILO International Labour Organization
INGO International Non-Governmental Organization
IRDS Institute of Research and Development Studies
ISI Inter-Service Intelligence
KACC Khwendo Kor Area Coordination Committee
KK Khwendo Kor (Sister's Home)
LHV Lady Health Visitor
ME Micro-Enterprise
MFG Manufacturing
MPA Member of Provincial Assembly

MNA Member of National Assembly
MMA Mutahidda Majlis e Ammal (Alliance of Religious Political Parties)
MO Men's Organization
NADRA National Assessment and Data Registration Agency
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NOC No Objection Certificate
NWFP North West Frontier Province
ORS Oral Re-hydration Solution
PCU Program Co-ordination Unit
PNF Pakistan NGO Federation
PPA Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTC Primary Teaching Certificate
RPU Regional Program Unit
SAFRON States and Frontiers Regions Division
SCF Save the Children Fund
SDP Sustainable Development Plan
SO Social Organizer
SRSP Sarhad Rural Support Program
SWD Social Welfare Department
TA Tribal Agency
UN United Nations
UNFPA United Nations Fund for Population Activities (Now the United Nations Population Fund)
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID United States Agency for International Development
VEC Village Education Committee
WB World Bank
WO Women's Organisation

Glossary

Angraizoon	British people, also used of foreigners generally
Asar	Afternoon, afternoon prayers
Azan	Call for prayers from mosque
Burqa	All enveloping women's dress
Chader	Woman's head-cloth
Chowkidar	Guard
Dam	Religious Healing
Dasteer	Norm, custom
Deen	Faith
Desi Ghee	Local Ghee
Fatwa	IslamicVerdict
Gadwad	Mess, mixed, contaminated, dirty
Hafiz-e-Quran	One who has learned the holy Quran by heart
Haram	Unlawful, Religiously forbidden
Hujra	The place in the village where men sit
Iftar	The time for breaking an Islamic fast
Jihad	Holy war
Jirga	Tribal Elders' council
Junoon	Craze
Kachi	Pre-school class
Karo-kari	Honour killing in Sindhi
Khail	Branch of a tribe (alternative spelling of Khel)
Khan	Used for people of Pathan origin, also an important person
Khasadar	Local militia consisting of tribal recruits
Khel	Branch of a tribe
Laree	To own, to have
Malik	A head man, tribal chief
Madrassa	Educational institution, usually a religious one
Maullana	One considered as knowledgeable of Islam
Maraca	Tribal gathering
Mazari	Plant used for making baskets
Mehrum	People between whom Islam forbids marriage (e.g. siblings, nephews and aunts, uncles and nieces)
Minat on Ziarat	Custom of making a wish or petition at a shrine
Mohalla	Street
Moutaba -e-shee	Become proud and arrogant
Mujahadeen	Literally those who fight a holy war
Murabaha	An Islamic mode of credit
Nawab	Member of the aristocracy
Nazim	Elected local Administrator
Nikat	A system based upon blood lineage from ancestors
Nimaz	Prayers
Pahktunwali	Pushtun code of conduct
Purdah	Veil, also the customs that segregate women

Pir	Holy man, saint
Qamarband	Bullet belt
Qismat	Fate
Rahdery	Import or export tax, also license to import or export
Salwayshta	Gathering
Sar	Head, brain
Safaid Raish	White bearded, elderly, respectable, wise
Sarkoor	Government
Shoora	Sharing
Stargay	Eyes
Sub-khail	Sub branch of a tribe (alternative spelling of sub-khel)
Sub-Khel	Sub branch of a tribe (alternative spelling of sub-khail)
Swara	A Pashtun tradition in which women are given as compensation to resolve conflicts
Taweez	Amulet
Tableegh	A custom whereby men go away with others to deepen their Islamic faith
Wali	Guardian, custodian
Walwar	Bride price (alternative spelling of wulwar)
Wulwar	Bride price (alternative spelling of walwar)
Zakat	Mandatory Islamic tax on rich for poor

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