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An Evaluation Research Study for ‘Grant of State Land to Landless Harees Programme Sindh’

Mukesh Kumar Khatwani

PhD Student, School of Law, Politics and Sociology, University of Sussex, UK

Assistant Professor, Area Study Centre, Fareast and South East Asia, University of Sindh, Pakistan

Shahabudin Mughal

Assistant Professor, Sindh Development Study Centre, University of Sindh, Pakistan

Ghazala Shoukat

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Pakistan

Abstract

The primary purpose of this paper is to suggest how to design a reflective piece to evaluate of a public or private programme. In this paper we have taken the public programme, ‘Grant of State Land to Landless Haree¹ Programme’ initiated by the Government of Sindh in 2008. The focus of this paper would be on the overall process of evaluation. What a researcher/evaluating team needs to consider, for example, what should the evaluation be for? Who should be evaluated? Who should be involved in the process of evaluation? Why and how they should be involved in process of evaluation? What should be the foreseen problems? What hurdles and risks could be during the evaluation process and how these risks or issues would be mitigated? Whom suggestions and recommendation for? Besides this, this paper will discuss about the suitable methodology applied for the evaluation study, methodological issues, ethical issues, political agenda, and political and personal contingencies.

Key Words: Evaluation research, methodology, summative evaluation, formative evaluation, political agenda, cost-effectiveness, outcome.

¹ It is used for peasants in Sindh, Pakistan.

Introduction to the Programme

In 2008, newly elected provincial government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) announced a major programme of land distribution among the poor peasants in the province of Sindh. The government of Sindh announced to distribute about 225,000 acres of land among landless *haree* in the first phase. The 'Grant of State Land to Landless *Haree* Programme' is one of the initiatives of the Government of Sindh through the Board of Revenue (BoR) Land Utilization Department and Sindh Rural Support Partners Consortium (RSPs-Con) for reducing poverty through harnessing the potential of the people. The land distribution programme is a unique one in the history of Pakistan, because the programme targets landless women *haree* of Sindh. The Grant of State Land to the poor Landless *Haree* is one of the central poverty reduction initiatives of the newly elected PPP's government. As per the policy, unencumbered state land will be allotted to the landless *haree* preferably to the women *haree*. This policy component is unprecedented and it can be expected to be a major ingredient for social change through empowerment of rural women. Sindh Government has been implementing this programme from September 2008. The programme has so far been implemented in 17 districts of Sindh and initiatives are undergoing to implement the same programme in other districts of the province as well.

Under this program, 212,864 acres of land of which 136,784 acres are of the barrage land would be distributed to poor women landless peasants. Each landless woman farmer would be allotted 25 acres of land. This initiative is the most significant in terms of possibilities of reducing poverty of that segment of Sindhi society which is not only the poorest of the poor in Sindh but in Pakistan too.

The prime purpose of this programmes are:

1. Bringing structural transformation in the Province of Sindh with targeting only genuine and poor landless *haree*, and giving clear priority to women of landless *haree* families; and
2. Providing a strong platform for economic empowerment of poor women of the Province.

The government of Sindh has also realized that only allotting land will not bring the empowerment and economic benefits to the families until and unless it is supported with economic package (including seeds, fertilisers, some funds etc.), For that purpose a support package amounting 665.543 million (Pak rupees) and agriculture inputs worth at least Rs: 14500/- per acre for a maximum four (4) acres of land will be given to each genuine beneficiaries. In this regard the agreement has been signed between Government of Sindh through Land Utilization Department and Sindh Rural Support Organizations Consortium (SRSOCon) for the delivery of support package to beneficiaries.

What is an evaluation?

First, this paper puts light on the term 'evaluation' and the importance of evaluation research for the policy and intervention programmes at national and at local level. In evaluation study questions such as why evaluation, what evaluation for, and whom evaluation for are vital and fundamental. According to Weiss the overall aim of evaluation is to assist people and organizations to improve their plans, policies and practices on behalf of citizens (Wimbush and Watson, 2000). There is no single definition that covers all the aspects of evaluation. There are various definitions because the purpose of every evaluation research could be different and also it could be conducted for various service

provider bodies i.e. central government, civil society organisations, and public as well as private service providers. Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth of merit of some object, or systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object (WCSR, n.d).

Above given both definitions clearly indicates that evaluation is a systematic effort/study of policy, programme or intervention so that by getting useful feedback the policy /programme could be made more result oriented and improved. The two major approaches to evaluation are: summative evaluation and normative evaluation (Clarke, 1999; Scriven, 1999). *Summative evaluation* tries to determine overall impact or effectiveness of the programme or policy, while *formative evaluation* tries to improve an intervention. Any evaluation requires pre-determined purposes; like evaluation for accountability, for development, and for knowledge (Chelimsky, 1997; Kennedy, Carroll, and Francoeur, 2012).

Framework for the Evaluation Research

The framework of evaluation study consists of: stages of project development, type of evaluation, purpose of evaluation, research questions, application (Wimbush and Watson 2000), and whose responsibility and what resource are required? These are some key elements which should be kept in view during the designing of evaluation research study. Researcher should know very well about various approaches to evaluation and an appropriate approach to evaluation should be adopted during the evaluation study. According to McKenzie et al (1998) 'all authoritative texts on evaluation note that there is no single best method of evaluation' (McKenzie, Sheely, and Twigwell, 1998). Therefore, the prime

purpose of the evaluation is crucial for selection of suitable method or approach to evaluation. This designed piece of evaluation research study aims to bring improvement in above-mentioned programme. Therefore, we are going to adopt 'formative approach' to this evaluation, which tries to bring improvement in intervention or policy programme. According to Patton (1987) 'formative evaluations often include a process of evaluation strategy in an attempt to describe how the programme actually operates especially in its early stages of development?' (Patton 1987:65]. The primary purpose of such formative evaluation is to identify ways in which the programme can be improved (Patton, 1987). Keeping in view the purpose of our evaluation study we will be discussing about various stages of the above-mentioned programme i.e. process of formulation of this policy programme, process of land identification, process of announcement of land and invitation of applications, process of land distribution, post land distribution issues, political agenda behind this programme etc.

Objectives of Designed Evaluation Study

After set the prime purpose of the evaluation research study, we need to set more objectives in the light of major purpose. Objectives of this designed evaluation research study are:

1. to examine the gaps in land distribution programme of Sindh Government;
2. to identify gaps and issues in land distribution process and procedures;
3. to study the issues of post land distribution sustainability vis-à-vis the benefits of programme; and
4. to prepare recommendations/suggestions for the government to bring improvement in this programme.

This evaluation will address the above mentioned objectives of the evaluation through following major components: (1) implementation evaluation: To provide data on key aspects of design, policy, practice, and development in each district, to provide data on programme objectives and facilitate the quantification of inputs for the analysis of cost effectiveness, and to produce data as framework for impact evaluation study. (2) Impact evaluation; to check the effects of 'Grant of State Land to Landless *Haree* Programme' on beneficiaries. (3) cost-benefit evaluation; what is the actual cost of initiative, do outcome justify the investment of resources? Cost-benefit analysis includes all effects, both positive and negative, and, direct, and indirect.

Method of data collection

The public programme, this evaluation study addresses, focuses 70% of landless women *haree* and 30% landless men *haree*. Therefore, evaluation teams should verify that actually 70 percent women are benefited from this programme or not, if less than 70% of women were granted land then why and what are the reasons? Secondly, the 95% of minority population is engaged with agriculture sector as landless *haree* (peasants) and are strongly supporter of Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) which has initiated this policy programme. So it would be kept in view whether minorities are beneficiaries of the policy programme or they excluded during the process of land distribution.

After the setting the objectives of evaluation research, evaluation research requires an appropriate method for data collection (i.e. baseline survey, focused group discussion, participant observation, semi-structured interview etc.). The appropriate choice of method and the sample site for data collection are crucial for evolution research. The sample should

be chosen very carefully. Furthermore, the team should be very much aware of various dimensions of evaluation, which helps evaluating team to collect comprehensive data. These dimensions could be service dimension, sample dimension and methodological dimension (Abuya, et al 2010). During the evaluation process the programme or intervention document is very important and it provides researcher a path to conduct evaluation research. Therefore, evaluation team should be well aware of objectives, activities, beneficiaries and the outcomes of the implemented programme.

The land distribution programme has been so far initiated in seventeen districts of Sindh province. However, it would be difficult for the study team to cover all the districts due to the limited time frame and availability of funds for the study. Therefore, the team, while keeping all the geographical, topographical as well as socio political dimension in view, will select only five districts of Sindh as site areas for the primary data collection purposes (as geographically Sind is divided into three parts; upper Sind, middle Sindh and lower Sindh, therefore, two district from upper Sindh, two districts form lower Sindh and one form middle Sindh are selected). This study suggests that data collection tools like focused group discussion, semi-structured interview and case studies of those persons who are allotted state land should be employed. The participants of this evaluation research must be district officials from land department, representatives of civil society organizations particularly RSPs (three partners NGOs of the programme) and land grantees (70% women and 30% men). Here the team should keep in view the

methodological issues, such as; study design, choice of approach to evaluation, tools of data collection, data sample, time of measurement of data, and parent report as a source of data.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to identify gaps in policy programme and suggest possible recommendations to bring improvement in it. Therefore, this study tries to evaluate all possible steps in process of development and implementation of this programme. Government of Sindh presented four major steps in its guideline policy for distribution of land; identification of available state land for distribution in different districts, announcement of the available land through print media and seeking applications from the landless *haree* for the distribution of the available land, organizing open *Katcharis* (public gathering) to identify and grant land to genuine land grantees, and; to issue land grant certificate to the land grantees.

This evaluation will try to find out the issues in process of programme implementation in various districts, for examples, issues in land identification and announcement process, issues in land distribution process, and issues post distribution of land. The issues in process of identification of land could be i.e. identification of disputed land, unlevelled land, waterlogged land etc. Salinity and water logging is a big problem in the province of in Sindh, so if the allotted land is waterlogged land then it could not be beneficial for allottees and the dream of women empowerment could not come true. The water crisis is also a big problem of Pakistan, so in case of no availability of water to that land could be a big issue. Caste disputes are very common in Sindh province, so in case if granted land lies at such location where two castes are already in quarrels with each other, then land grantee (women) could have no access to

that allotted piece of land. She would have only a land granted certificate but she would have no actual access and possession to that land, and that land may be occupied by influential persons. Secondly, the issues in the announcement of distribution of land application, as announcement of land distribution in various districts was made through print media; therefore, it is not possible for those poor rural landless farmers, particular women who are not educated to know about the announcement of land distribution and how and where they send their applications. Thus, there are chances that genuine landless *haree* in general and women landless *haree* in particular might not be known about land distribution application process and they would have not given applications for the land. Thirdly, after receiving the applications, open public gatherings were arranged to identify genuine land grantees. How is it possible to identify genuine land grantees from receiving applications through open *Katchari* (meetings) when having no developed criteria for genuine land grantees? How the process of verification of applications was conducted? After the land distribution the documentation process become very much complicated because at the present time the allottees were given only land grant certificate, while actually they need proper documentation of that land by the revenue department. There are chances of quarrels between castes over the land if the granted land lies with adjust to land of other person who belongs to different castes. Following are the key aspects which must be covered during this proposed evaluation study for 'Grant of State Land to Landless *Haree* Programme' to indentify the gaps, so that the mentioned policy programme could be improved and more result oriented:

1. In which context the policy programme was initiated?
2. Who were the key actors and stakeholders of the policy programme?

3. What were the policy problems?
4. What line of action was followed during implementation of this policy programme?
5. How did implementing partners work in practice?
6. Were the actual beneficiaries of the policy programmes landless *harae* (70% women and 30% men)?
7. Were all resource used effectively?
8. Did policy programme meet the set objectives?
9. What were the problems and hurdles during implementation of programme?
10. How effectively these problems were mitigated?

This evaluation research primarily aims to identify gaps in the policy programme so that the programme could be improved. This policy of land distribution is introduced by the current government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP); therefore, evaluation team should keep in view the political intention and political interest behind this policy programme. Before this policy programme, two previous governments also introduced land distribution programme. Here the accountability and transparency of land distribution is a big issue. How the government will make ensure that land distributed on the merit and not on political basis? It could be intention of present government to provide its voters with economic benefits. Here the evaluation team should keep in view the hurdles and risks in data collection because of the political interests, political parties and influential persons of the local area who mostly are affiliated with political parties one or another. Whether the beneficiaries of the policy programmes are people who are affiliated or supporter of current government or they are common people. May be the collected data for this evaluation study from the government officials support that political parties and hide truth.

As this evaluation is being conducted by third party, therefore the big issue is access

to true data, there could be a big threat that government officials and representatives may hide the true data and share the data which supports their policy programme or they may deny giving required information for evaluation. By this the actual gaps in mentioned policy programme may not be explored out. Secondly, due to the limited resource (money, time, and expert team) there are threats that many aspect of evaluation study could not be covered. Here the expertises of evaluation team are very important, they should be aware of all aspects of policy programmes (i.e. planning and implementation, theory and practice, ideal and real). The evaluation team would face problems to have access to beneficiaries (particularly women) of this programme because of the strong cultural traditions, secondly, due to the strong feudal system (feudal lords have also influence in their concerned political parties), the beneficiaries may not provide actual information but they may give information that only supports that political party and feudal lords. Thus, there is a big threat that collected data may not be sufficient or helpful to find out the actual gaps in policy programme. The most important thing that the initiators and implementers of policy programme will want to present positive aspects of programme and hide the negative aspects, as they could show that implemented programme successfully met the set targets.

Ethical Consideration

The participants of this evaluation research will be government officials, representative of implementing agencies and beneficiaries of the programme. The evaluation does not raise such sensitive issues which make the participants upset during data collection process, however; the participants may avoid sharing information because of political and local lord's influence over the participants. To mitigate this problem the participants particularly beneficiaries would be take into confidence and briefed about the aims and objective of the evaluation research,

and they would also be taken into confidence that their shared experiences and information will be kept confidential

and only be used for this study. Their consent would be taken in written on specific developed format.

Competing Interests

Authors have no any competing interests.

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