

Community-based Organizations as Partners in Poverty Alleviation Lessons learnt and Good Practice Examples from Yemen

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT:	1
1.1 STUDY CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY:.....	1
1.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT: CBOs IN YEMEN	1
2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:	2
2.1 THE IMPACT OF LOCAL SETTINGS ON THE FORMATION OF CBOs.....	2
2.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CBO OPERATIONS	3
2.3 CBOs' LINKAGES WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS:	8
3. CONCLUSIONS	10
4. REFERENCES:	10

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT:

1.1 STUDY CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY:

The last decade has seen an increasing role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in rural development. This is due to their structural characteristics, which match the global shift towards participatory development and good governance. This has led to an escalating concern regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of CBOs vis-à-vis their mission statements and functions as catalysts for sustainable development. In view of this rationale, FAO conducted a study in 2003 to analyze the institutional aspects of more than 50 CBOs in Yemen, which were initiated with the support of the Community-Based Regional Development Programme (CBRDP). This UNDP funded and FAO technically assisted programme operates in 10 districts since 1999, representing five ecological zones. Regional offices are located in: (i) Ghail Bin Yamein (G.B.Y), (ii) Al-Makha, (iii) Khamis Bani Saa'd (K.B.S), (iv) As-Swadeya, and (v) Aden. The programme's principal objective is to strengthen CBOs as key actors and partners in the contexts of decentralization and poverty alleviation. It intervenes in five inter-related components: (i) institutional building, (ii) human capacity building and training, (iii) community-based financial services, (iv) gender perspective and (v) institution-based coordination. The Basic criteria used to establish CBOs were: that they (i) have emerged from the targeted communities, (ii) development-oriented, and (iii) are registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL).

The study identified lessons learnt from the formation and operation of CBOs, captured good practice examples and made policy recommendations, which may support the replication of these experiences in Yemen and other countries under similar contexts¹. The study methodology combined the use of primary and secondary data with different Participatory Learning and Actions (PLA) methods and tools. This paper summarizes some of the key findings of the study, focusing on issues revealed crucial for the formation and operations of local institutions in decentralized rural development.

1.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT: CBOs IN YEMEN

¹ The full study report can be found under the web-link: http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe2/pe2_040901_en.htm

The Republic of Yemen emerged in May 1990, following the unification of the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. It covers 527,970 sq km and with a total population of 18.4 MIO (2000) about 73.5% of them lives in rural areas. The annual population growth rate is 3.4%. Yemen is one of the least developed countries in the world and ranked 148 out of 178 countries assessed in the 2003 Global Human Development Report. The latest household budget survey (1998) revealed that 17.6% of Yemeni lives below the food poverty line and 41.8% live below the absolute (upper) poverty line. Poverty in Yemen has a strong rural attribute with 83% of the poor and 87% of the food-insecure living in rural areas.

Yemen has had a rich history of grass root level community-based institutions. The tribe (Qabilah) is the most prominent informal institution in Yemen and a crucial element of the social, economic, cultural and political life. It provides social identity to individuals and a reference point for cultural values and social behaviors. The tribe is a hierarchy of segmentary structures, which place individuals into large concentric circles. Everybody knows his/her roles as they are defined by the well-articulated customary regulations (Hukm), which, together with the religious laws (Sharia), dictate behaviors and attitudes. Tribes are divided into clans, which are composed of lineages. Each tribe has a tribal territory and within the tribal territory each clan has its own portion of land. Borders between tribes and between clans are well-demarcated and ownership is documented in local contracts. In each tribe, authority is vested by a Sheikh and, under the Sheikh, in an Aqil. The Sheikh is a sort of "primus inter pares", a mediator, in charge of solving disputes between his tribesmen and of representing the tribe vis-à-vis the other tribal entities, administrative authorities and others.

The history of semi-formal community institutions, however, is rather new. They started in Aden under British rule as charitable societies and, afterwards, expanded to other parts. The first associations' law was approved in 1963 and revised in 2001. The revised cooperatives' law was approved in 1998. According to Yemen Human Development Report (2000/2001), the number of officially registered CSOs in Yemen in 2001 was 2,786. The vast majority of CBOs are charity-focused. According to an informal source from the MoSAL, the current number of registered CSOs is 4142 (both figures should be read with caution). However, only 18% are considered active. This is attributed to: (i) a low level of institutionalization of structures, mechanisms and practices, (ii) inadequate technical capacities, (iii) fragile adherence to internal good governance mechanisms (iv) ambiguity of visions, procedures and tools to achieve objectives (v) high vulnerability to tribal and area-based affiliations, and (vi) inadequate financial resources. The establishment of CBOs under the CBRDP and their empowerment process were meant to make a difference to the above tendency by creating active, sustainable partners in local development.

2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

2.1 THE IMPACT OF LOCAL SETTINGS ON THE FORMATION OF CBOs

The following local settings were major influencing factors in the CBOs' formation² process:

The socio-territorial set-up: The MoSAL's law no. 1/2001, under which CBOs are registered, obliges any CBO to specify a well-defined geographical zone for its operations and membership. The local communities' decisions on this matter vary based on their socio-cultural context. In the strong tribal contexts of As-Swadeya and K.B.S, CBOs were formed on a purely tribal basis, which also satisfied the geographical element of the law³. In some cases, this led to the establishment of CBOs with geographical boundaries too large to cover adequately and serve all members. The CBO territoriality had significant impacts on its inclusiveness and capacity for equitable representation. In Al-Makha and Aden where the tribal system is rather fragile, CBOs were formed on the basis of social homogeneity and geographical proximity.

The dominance of traditional power structures: The dominance of local elites, traditional leaders and powerful groups is a big challenge faced by CBOs in Yemen. Due to their comparative advantages, these

² The effects of local settings on CBOs was not confined to their formation only; instead, it also affected their internal operations and relationships with the environment.

³ People of the same tribe often settle in the same place.

groups often lead dictate the formulation of CBOs without adequate attention to the involvement of other community members. In situations where strong tribalism dominates, the exclusion of tribal leaders from CBOs would create deep conflicts and block its future operations. Moreover, it would be rather difficult to isolate a CBO, as a development-oriented organization from the tribe as social institution. Therefore, CBO formation and operations are highly vulnerable to tribal conflicts. The level of interaction between traditional power structures and CBOs varies depending on the local setting. While traditional power structures are included and/or represented in the EBs of some CBOs, the majority of CBOs assigned honourable position to tribal leaders.

The presence of and attention given to socio-culturally marginalized groups: The ethnic composition of Yemeni society is characterized by the existence of marginalized/socially excluded groups (*Akhdam*). In the study areas, they exist in K.B.S, G.B.Y and Aden. Their existence alongside the strong tribal system in K.B.S, led to their exclusion from the social system and, in turn, from participation in CBOs' formation. The situation is different in Aden and GBY. In Aden, they were actively involved in the the formation and operations of CBOs, which might be best explained by Aden's multi-racial character as well as its ideological and political history. In GBY, this is due to the socio-political effects of the former governing socialist party, which enforced the concepts of equality.

The purpose of CBO formation: The general challenges facing CBOs at their formation stage include the need to respond to critical local gaps and to attract memberships on that basis. A common risk during is that CBOs often establish themselves either to respond to an outside demand, or purely to tap available financial resources. The CBOs studied were not an exception in this regard. It was crucial, however, that CBRDP was aware about this phenomenon and designed relevant strategies, which strengthen local ownership, community commitment and shared responsibility.

Lessons Learnt and Examples of Good Practice

- The formation process of CBOs proved to be essential since it influences their operations and sustainability. At this stage, the following are among the prerequisites shown to be crucial:
 - A clear mission and vision based on genuine communal gaps and needs,
 - Wide participation of all community members and groups in order to reach a community agreement on joint CBO objectives and activities. CBO membership should jointly devise clear and transparent plans to attain tangible benefits for the members.
 - Precise participatory development of the CBO's constitution and bylaws.
 - Committed and trusted leadership are there and backed-up by a critical mass. However, experience has highlighted that this type of leadership and drivers can be a potential risk element during later stages if not carefully monitored (discussed latter). Thus, specific roles, responsibilities and rights of the leaders, the EB and GA should be clearly developed, agreed upon and documented in the CBO constitution and bylaws
- If a CBO establishment has been induced by an external programme, the decision for formation (or not) should be made solely by the local community, with the role of the external programme being kept to consultation, awareness raising and provision of technical support.
- The term 'CBO' explicitly indicates what a CBO's territory should emphasize, which is the community as a holistic concept implying the people and their relationships as well as their association with the place. This framework underlined both the social "people and relations" and the physical "place and resources" dimensions. Therefore, in rural areas, the CBOs' territory should be determined by a combination of key factors including social homogeneity, common interests and geographical proximity instead of merely focusing on tribal geographical boundaries and/or only geographical proximity.
- In the urban context, CBOs' formation could be based on the smallest geographical zones that would ensure reasonable level of social homogeneity. Moreover, the establishment/strengthening of occupational-based specialized local associations may be recommended.

2.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CBO OPERATIONS

CBOs as membership-based organizations are judged not only on the basis of their results as compared to their objectives, but also in relation to the processes that they adopt to produce these results. Consequently, CBOs are facing common challenges of responding to the critical demands of their members and keeping them interested and committed in the participation of their operations. Community participation is

understood here as “a social process in which specific groups with shared needs living in a defined geographical area take an active part in the process of planning and implementing development activities as well as enjoying their benefits”⁴. This definition implies the concepts of community and participation. A community is firstly defined geographically and secondly in terms of social factors as well as the sharing of specific resources and needs. In the context of Yemen, this strongly implies that the concept of community is not synonymous to the concept of a village as a geographical term. Participation, the other hand, refers to the active involvement of groups and individuals. In this sense, participation can range from simple information sharing, to situations where the relevant stakeholders take on responsibility for monitoring the process and evaluating its success.

Findings and Examples of Good Practice

Targeting Mechanisms: The study revealed that all CBOs give high importance to the participation and direct benefit of the poor. To this effect, all CBOs apply successfully a participatory targeting mechanism known as the Revolving Labour Pool (RLP). In the process of establishing RLP, community members identify simple community-driven indicators reflecting their perception towards poverty (e.g. income, number of livestock, etc.) and use these indicators to develop specific well-being categories (e.g. destitute, poor, middle-income, rich). Thereafter, they sort all households within the community into the specified categories. The primary target group for CBO assistance are members classified as poor. The destitute are supported by the CBOs to gain access to the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) and other direct cash support mechanisms including the Zakat. Middle-income members only benefit directly from CBO managed credit interventions under restricted conditions such as the creation of employment opportunities for the poor. Poor CBO members constitute 61% of credit direct beneficiaries compared to middle-income (30%) and rich community members (9%).

Representation of Women: Women represent 36.8% of the CBO membership, which is low in absolute terms, however higher compared to the average figure of women’s representation in mixed CBOs in Yemen (29%⁵). In addition to socio-cultural factors, the relatively slow speed in moving towards higher participation of women in CBO operations is attributed to the fact that the CBRDP initially adopted a unified gender strategy for all action areas not recognizing enough the location-specific differences. In this regard, the programme unit in Al-Makha developed a simple implementation approach which capitalizes on awareness raising of both men and women as an entry point to change attitudes, increase women’s participation and ultimately, women’s economic empowerment. This approach appears appropriate and consistent within the local setting.

The scope and diversity of CBO services: The extent to which a CBO addressed the concerns of various community groups related significantly to the size of their membership and the success of their operations. On top of their basic service portfolio promoted by CDRBP (mainly, institutional building, training, credit and mediators for provision of basic services), most CBOs also provided other additional services to make their operations attractive for community members. Most of the additional “priority” fields addressed the poor and to a less extent, the middle-income groups. While this gave the CBOs an additional pro-poor focus, it limited the level of involvement of other community wealth groups in some cases. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that those CBOs, which kept their interventions limited to the above-mentioned basic service portfolio, experienced a lower level of community involvement in their operations. The following are the most significant among the self-selected, additional services:

- **Implementing communal investment projects with a social dimension** (e.g. water tanks, telecommunications, pharmacies, small shops, bakeries, etc.) By responding to some pressing community needs, these projects increased CBO membership and, simultaneously, promoted active interactions between the EBs’ and the GAs’ members. Additionally, these projects provided good mechanisms for the expansion the CBOs’ benefits to all strata including the poor and non-members.
- **Provision of consumption credit** to the poorest CBO members on seasonal basis.

⁴ Sharon Beatty, Sabria al-Thawr and Thabet Bagash (April, 2002); Community Participation Experiences in Yemen: A National Review.

⁵ Source: Yemen Human Development Report (2000/2001), UNDP and MoPIC

- Implementing various *self-help initiatives within the larger community context* (practiced by 67% of the CBOs). These initiatives cover a wide and diversified scope, which included: cash support to destitute, liaising with government departments to establish pro-poor policies and procedures, provision of some pressing community needs, vocational training and literacy education for women, environmental activities, cultural, health, sport and religious activities, support to public facilities, and community-driven gentlemen agreements to organize communal issues and mediation to reduce harmful behaviors. Analysis of these self-help initiatives revealed the following findings:
 - a. There are positive correlations between the level of the CBO's self-help initiatives and (i) its organizational maturity and (ii) the level of participation at the General Assembly.
 - b. Spatial analysis disclosed that:
 - (i) Aden's CBOs are most advanced with regard to self-help initiatives. This is partly explained by the competition amongst CBOs to intensify self-help initiatives in order to attract membership. In addition, the high level of awareness of Aden's CBOs enabled them to realize that waiting for government response to their needs may not be the correct approach.
 - (ii) The local settings had a strong impact on the scope of CBO self-help initiatives. For instance, in rural areas CBOs gave the highest emphasis to different mechanisms of cash support to destitute families, the provision of basic needs and to a less extent, to vocational training and literacy education for women. In the urban area of Aden, CBOs implemented cultural and sport initiatives and liaised with different governments departments to lobby for pro-poor policies and procedures. Although early to judge, this indicates the potential future roles of CBOs influence over government's policies and practices.
 - (iii) Particularly in rural areas, CBOs successfully attracted financial assistance from local wealthy and/or charitable people in support of CBO self-help initiatives.
 - (iv) Amongst rural areas, the highest level of self-help initiatives was found where the indigenous local culture of solidarity among the tribes' members was strongest.

Economically heterogeneous groups for income generating activities (IGA). The experiment of CBOs to linking poor with middle-income community members for joint group-based IGAs yielded interesting results. Successful, good practice examples are labour-intensive IGAs in the agricultural and fishery sectors. For example, the *Kheyol Al-Badeya* CBO (Al-Makha) financed a group of 72 middle-income small-scale farmers (after environmental studies indicated a sustainable production basis) with certified onion seeds and other production inputs for four production seasons. On average/per production season, 208 poor agricultural labourers directly benefited from the job opportunities created. Before credit, each middle-income farmer employed 1.63 labourers per season; the number increased by (78%) i.e. an additional 1.3 jobs per onion farmer per season as a result of the increased area under cultivation. The same intervention also refreshed the local transportation sector, and benefited the water pump owners who provided water to water-less farmers against certain fees as well as agricultural traders and marketing agents (table 1).

Table 1: Development of Onion Farmers after support from by *Kheyol Al-Badeya* CBO (Al-Makha):

Variable	Before Intervention	After Intervention	Change (%)
Number (No.) of middle-income farmers	59	72	22
No. of agricultural labourers employed	96	208	117
Created job opportunities per farmer	1.63	2.89	78
No. of benefiting water pump owners	13	17	31
No. of loading trucks involved	14	25	79
No. of middlemen and marketing agents	8	13	63

Another generic example is the cases where CBOs financed fishing boats for mixed groups of poor and middle-income fishermen. In these cases, each boat is owned by three families and creates permanent employment opportunities for another three poor labourer fishermen. Another positive side-impact from linking poor community members with better skilled ones through group-based financing was that the

unskilled poor households got access to and learned about responsible credit operations. “In Al-Makha, about 30.3% of the members of groups funded had no previous experiences with credits. Currently, this group is acquiring these experiences through knowledge transfer of their group colleagues” (PITA, October 2003)⁶.

Specific Lessons

- The best representation of different social groups within CBOs revealed a correlation between (i) reasonable geographical coverage, (ii) sensible degree of social homogeneity, (iii) high level of awareness and sensitivity regarding communal issues, (iv) and appropriate mechanisms that ensure equitable representation of all socio-economic groups in the Executive Board.
- Approaches for women’s participation in CBO operations should be location and situation-specific and precisely developed on the basis of comprehensive analysis.
- Generally, the CBOs should not limit their focus to the activities assisted by outside agencies. Instead, they should initiate other complementary activities, which address all segments and age groups of the community. The promotion of self-help activities which were identified within the CBOs showed strong propensity to: (i) mobilize and rationalize the use of community resources, (ii) induce and foster self-reliance, (iii) contribute, significantly, to the social and economic development of the communities, (iv) make the CBOs very attractive for the community and GAs’ members, (v) a pro-poor focus, and (vi) respond to the various interests of different socio-economic and age groups. CBOs should emphasize the implementation of such initiatives, given their socio-cultural peculiarities and settings.
- The experience of the CBOs with regard to the development and use of the participatory targeting mechanisms (RLP) showed that in addition to being a relevant methodology, to strengthen community solidarity, its application facilitated (i) transparent community-owned decisions to promote the poor (ii) and the linking of poor community members with middle income, better skilled community members for joint group-based productive IGAs,
- Labour-intensive IGAs facilitated group-based collaboration between poor and middle-income members, through which poor could tap employment opportunities. The group-based financing provided good opportunities for skills’ transfer, experience sharing within the groups and was in favor of poor and less-skilled community members.

2.2 GOVERNANCE AND CBO MANAGEMENT:

Governance is defined as “the process by which stakeholders articulate their interests, their input is absorbed, decisions are taken and decision-makers are held accountable”⁷. One goal of good governance is to enable an organization to effectively do its work. However, good governance is about more than 'getting the job done'. Especially in the context of CBOs, where values typically play an important role in determining both organizational purpose and style of operation, process is as important as product. Good governance is therefore, about both achieving the desired results and achieving them in the right way. Since the "right way" is largely shaped by cultural norms and values, there can be no universal template for good governance. Nonetheless, some common characteristics include⁸: participation, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision. The study applied two main indicators in assessing CBOs’ governance: (a) EB operations and response to above characteristics, and (b) the interaction between EB and GA. However, since integration of traditional power structures into CBOs’ structures revealed significant vis-à-vis governance, the study also assessed this variable.

General findings and examples of good practice

Operations of CBOs’ Executive Boards: The basic rules of CBO operations include that their EBs must be democratically elected by the GA, must adhere to the CBO’s constitution and bylaws and adopt accountability and transparency measures. The EBs maintained division of labour via Specialized Technical Committees (STC). In view of the above characteristics of good governance and the EBs’ tasks, the study

⁶ Participatory Impacts Trends Assessment: Al-Makha; CBRDP, October 2003.

⁷ Source: “Governance and Human Rights”, Institute on Governance, 2001

⁸ Source: "Governance and Sustainable Human Development", UNDP, 1997.

showed that decision-making process within the EBs follows participatory patterns. Consensus building was the most common approach for decision making. EBs rarely resort to voting as decision-making mechanism (limited to only 8% of the EBs' decisions). The EBs' members attributed this to the clarity of the adopted implementation systems. Nevertheless, in some EBs, which included Sheikhs, the participatory interactions within the EB are directly or indirectly, hampered by the Sheikh. In these cases voting was more appropriate.

In some CBOs, the EBs consulted some of their constituencies before deciding on crucial issues, often of informal nature and seldom, through exceptional GAs' meetings. In some CBOs, the GAs' members are invited to attend the EBs' meetings as observers. While consensus orientation is considered high within EBs, equity measures were not followed in the majority of CBOs. This was caused by the low involvement of women in decision making within the EBs with the exception of Aden and another few CBOs in Al-Makha. Most EBs communicated their decisions to the GAs through informal channels and a few, mainly in Aden, are using signboards and other formal means. Financial accountability is significant, which is attributed to the use of simple and clear financial systems. On the other hand it is obvious in some CBOs that the number of active members in the EBs is rather limited and accordingly, few members are handling most of the executive work. The following causes were highlighted by the EBs:

1. EB members are operating on a purely voluntary basis. Under the pressing economic conditions, it is rather difficult for the majority of them to allocate enough time to the CBOs' operations.
2. Some EB members lack essential skills, which are prerequisites for executive work such as the ability to read and write. This disqualified them for some of the executive tasks. Hence, local communities need to be informed of the responsibilities of the EBs and the necessary selection criteria in advance in order to assist them in making informed, selection decisions.
3. The division of labour within the EB is not properly allocated and rationalized. For instance, members of the *Sandug* (fund) committee are usually very busy while the amount of work of other committees is by far less. This high workload of some tasks created a reluctance among the unutilised/under utilized members. Therefore, it is extremely important to define the size of EBs and its sub-committees in accordance with their tasks/TOR.

Interactions Between EBs and GAs: The nature and strength of linkages between the EBs and the communities is key for sustainable CBO operations. The study identified the following key factors:

- ***The first election of EB members is crucial*** in electing the "right" persons with high social trust and reputation. Nonetheless, this was not the case in some CBOs.
- ***Frequency of formal meetings between the EB and the GA:*** Regular periodic GA meetings (both formal and informal) are crucial. However, this is not a common practice amongst all CBOs. The reason behind this gap is largely attributed to the MoSAL's law no. 1/2001, which links mandatory GA's meetings with the re-election of the EB every three years. Exceptional GA meetings upon a request of either the EB or the GA are allowed by law under restricted conditions. However, this issue was not addressed/counteracted by the constitutions of some CBOs, although legally allowed. In addition, in some CBOs the GA is not fully acquainted with the CBO's bylaws. This is either due to the poor level of GA's participation in the preparations or because these documents were presented in a polished technical language, which is beyond the understanding ability of the illiterate members.
- ***The negative effects of creating a CBO on a purely geographical basis.*** With the exception of Aden with its urban uniqueness, the GA-EB gap is wider in those communities that formed their CBOs on a purely geographical basis especially those which cover vast geographical areas.
- ***Differences in political affiliations*** widen the gap between the GAs and EBs especially in highly politicized areas. Thus, the EBs' members should differentiate between their personal political activities and their institutional roles as executive members of non-political entities.

Integration of Existing Power Structures into the CBOs' Structures: The highly tribal-influenced situation of rural Yemen, challenges the operations of CBOs, especially of participatory interactions within the EBs. A challenge caused by the CBOs is the intended shift from the individual Sheikh-centered to institutional/group-based (EBs) leadership at the community level, which puts the traditional privileges of Sheikhs at risk. In view of this, the level of involvement of the Sheikhs in CBOs' structures varies from complete lack of involvement (2%), to involvements as GA's members (25%), as EB's members (14%) and as honorable members in certain advisory positions (11%). 28% of Sheikhs were represented in the EBs by a family member. In addition to the impact of the overall local setting, the leadership style and the personal

characteristics of the Sheikhs as well as their understanding of their roles vis-à-vis the CBO induced the above variations. Within the EBs, the pattern of interactions of Sheikhs varies from participatory leaders, to event driven Sheikhs who do not have time to regularly interact with the CBO's, to tribe-oriented ones who constantly mix tasks and responsibilities between the CBO and the tribe.

Specific Lessons Learnt:

- Frequent GA's meetings proved to be an appropriate mechanism to promote lively interactions between GA members to increase the GA - EB dialogue and to foster good governance.
- Laws are usually developed to provide an overall organizational and regulating framework. Therefore, they are not necessarily responding to specific locations, or thematic foci or other peculiarities of any specific CBO. The CBOs should recognize this and the fact that the laws do not block a CBO from reflecting its interests and concerns in its own internal regulations.
- The point above, however, does not withstand the serious need in Yemen to adjust the current MoSAL's law no. 1/2001 in order to match the requirements of all development-oriented CBOs.
- The constitutions and bylaws of the CBOs, which are established by communities who are lacking previous experiences with formal organizations, are too often simply transcripts of the sample documents offered by the legislative authorities. This must be adjusted since the CBO should develop these essential documents in view of its interests and specifications with the maximum participation/consultation of the CBO's members and within the overall legal limits. In this regard, *Al-Mustaqbal* CBO (As-Swadeya) offered a good example by translating its constitution and bylaws into simple language using the local dialect.
- No unified lesson could be generalized with regard to the inclusion of *Sheikhs* into EBs; instead, this should be assessed on case-by-case basis and in view of the context. While *Sheikhs* in EBs may block democratic decision making and/or affect EBs' operations due to their occupied agenda, their exclusion may seriously damage the CBO operations. However, one among the good practices adopted by some CBOs, in this regard, is to assign them certain honourable tasks (e.g. act as moral collateral for credit recipients) and positions (e.g. advisory bodies).
- CBOs should capitalize on certain positive Tribal norms and practices and utilize them in a developmental context. For instance, the *Aghram* system, though encourages conflicts, could be used to promote community-driven development initiatives. Another good practices adopted by a CBOs in As-Swadeya is using the ethics of the honour (*Sharaf*) as an efficient and flexible informal "moral" collateral to guarantee repayment of due credit.

2.3 CBOs' LINKAGES WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS:

Mechanisms to Promote CBOs' Horizontal Linkages: The fact that all studied CBOs were initiated with the assistance of CBRDP, implies the following consequences: (i) similarity of structures and systems, (ii) good opportunities for sharing information and experiences among CBOs of the same area through programme-organized activities, and (iii) an increased level of competition among CBOs. These factors, except competition, facilitated good collaboration among the CBOs of the same area. This collaboration manifested in the following ways: (a) the early on established CBOs assisted in the formulation of new ones through participation in the sensitization process, (b) some advanced CBOs organized training programmes, through their trained staff, for the newly established ones, (c) exchanged visits among CBOs, and (d) inter CBOs' consultative and coordination meetings. However, the CBOs did not utilize the aforementioned comparative advantages and initiatives to develop organized coalitions among CBOs of the same area. This might be associated to: (i) competition amongst CBOs, (ii) existing legislative barriers since the law hampers the formation of CBO federations to unions through rather discouraging conditions, (iii) lack of awareness amongst CBOs about the potential benefits of coming together in an organized form (iv) the absence of similar demonstrative successful models. CBOs of the same action area should promote their existing coordination mechanisms into networks as strategic means to foster their capacities for advocacy and lobbying as well as to ease institutional-based vertical linkages with other institutions.

CBO Linkages with the Local Councils (LCs): The decentralization started in Yemen in February 2000 and LCs elections were held in April 2001. However, three years after their election, most LCs are not yet functional as foreseen by the law. They neither plan the development of their jurisdictions nor do they budget their resources. Since the CBOs' establishment preceded LCs' formations, the CBOs' initial design did not emphasize the coordination between the two entities. While in some areas coordination was

initiated positively, LCs in other areas were negatively intervening in CBOs' operations. Until 2003 the coordination had not yet been properly institutionalized and remained attributed mainly to some persons who are both CBOs and LCs members. Strikingly, CBO members represent 35% of all LCs' membership in the 10 districts where CBOs are operating. A considerable percentage of CBOs'/LCs' common members who have evolved as new local leaders appeared highly qualified for LC elections as a result of their competency in CBOs' management. Where in place, the common members work for the benefit of both the CBOs and the LCs in the following ways; they: (1) included community priorities identified by CBOs into the LCs' plans, which also strengthens the LCs' plans, and (2) added extra value to the LCs' operations due to their experience in working with communities and the technical skills they have gained through training in their CBOs. Yemen's new macro-policies emphasized decentralization. In that context, CBOs must strengthen their vertical linkages to increase complementary and institutional sustainability. Thus, it is important for the two entities to institutionalize and strengthen their relationships. The CBOs revealed high comparative advantages to stand as a competent partner to LCs at the community level as justified by:

- The administrative set-up in Yemen starts at the district level with no administrative structures existed at the community level. This gap challenges the transparency/accountability dimensions of the LCs' operations especially when we consider the unfavorable demographic and topographical factors. The CBOs however being democratically formed and operational at the community level, can help bridge this critical gap especially in terms of a two-way information flow;
- As disclosed by the LCs, communities that have CBOs are better organized in comparison to others. Thus, CBOs represent organized communities, which can more easily interact with LCs;
- Common CBOs'/LCs' members showed better skills and experience compared to other LCs' members. This implies that the CBOs could offer more competent candidates for LC elections;
- CBOs often have tested technical systems for participatory planning and targeting. This could be especially built on by the LCs' as at present, they lack such systems; and
- CBOs collected and updated diversified data at the community level. They could offer both the data and the data collection and management expertise, which would enforce LCs' plans.

Despite these comparative advantageous, the following elements of risk need to be addressed:

1. There are critical legislative inconsistencies between the law no. 1/2001 of the MoSAL and the Local Authority (LA) law no. 4/2000. Both claim supervisory role of CBOs' activities without clarity of the term "supervision". This leads to subjective individual interpretations of each LC with regard to the term. While some LCs understood it as their objective to monitor CBOs associated with backing them up, the majority understand it as autocratic control.
2. The LA's law no. 4/2000 does not describe the legal relationship between the LCs and CBOs.

CBOs' Linkages with other Local and National Institutions: With CBRDP's assistance, CBOs were prepared to take a pro-active role in liaising and coordinating with other relevant actors at local and national levels. As a result, the CBOs tapped a total of US \$ 2.2 MIO (62% of total CBOs' resource portfolio) from 36 agencies. The activities financed from additional resources resulted in some significant positive likely impact. However, these are still preliminary results and lack sustainability since there are no institutional-based coordination mechanisms in place between the CBOs and the other actors. It is obvious that this is an example of how the recommended CBOs' networks and federations could be very helpful.

Specific Lessons Learnt

- The common CBOs'/LCs' members demonstrated better skills and richer experience compared to other LCs' members. Thus, strategically, the promotion of CBOs' capacity building could be a good vehicle to get qualified people elected into the LCs'.
- The coordination initiatives between CBOs and LCs need to be institutionalized and based on clear legislative vision that maintains the entity of each institution. To this effect, the comparative strengths of both parties should be jointly assessed and value added of both parties should be maximized and, simultaneously, the legislative inconsistencies as well as the legal relationship between both should be seriously addressed.
- CBOs should emphasize strong vertical relations with relevant actors. The studied CBOs offered a good practical example of tapping resources from different sources, which might be due to their comparative advantage and the organized approach adopted for this purpose. However, all CBOs' coordination activities should be institutionalized (instead of being on personal basis) to foster sustainability.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study findings and in view of the general organizational aspects and performance of CBOs in Yemen, the assessed CBOs showed fair successes regarding: (i) empowerment of local communities through self-owned and managed community-driven organizations, (ii) responsiveness to the demands and aspirations of local people, particularly the poor, in both processes and results, (iii) pro-poor inclusiveness of structures and mechanisms, (iv) interactions with traditional power structures, and (vi) coordination of local poverty alleviation initiatives through various means.

Moreover, CBOs have good potential and comparative advantages- although some were not yet used- in the following aspects: (i) institutionalized coordination with the Local Councils, and (ii) tendencies to influence pro-poor policies and to contribute to good governance within the decentralized context. The new orthodoxy of “good governance” has thrust CBOs, including the CBOs under assessment, onto centre-stage of development but with new dual roles. In addition to service provision, CBOs are also seen as pivotal actors though advocacy, in contributing to local policy development and in holding local governments to account for their actions. Both issues required competent CBO coalitions, alliance building and a strong advocacy.

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