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Cite This Article: Ahmad, S. & Alam, F. (2026). Beyond Cash Transfers: Governance, Climate Stress, and the Structural Limits of Poverty Reduction in District Mohmand of Peripheral Pakistan. *Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy*. 4 (02), 168-178.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71327/jssrp.42.168.178>

ISSN: 3006-6557 (Online)

ISSN: 3006-6549 (Print)

Vol. 4, No. 2 (2026)

Pages: 168-178

Key Words:

Poverty Governance, Conditional Cash Transfers, Climate Vulnerability, Fragile Contexts, Social Protection, Pakistan

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Abstract: *This research paper examines the role of conditional cash transfer program (CCTP) in reducing poverty in the governance, conflict, and climate-induced disaster affected area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, District Mohammad. Keeping in view the nature of the problem, the study employed mixed method research by including 341 households and 30 participants for interviews. CCTP plays significant role in addressing the practical and strategic needs of the beneficiaries such as water, food etc., that have stabilized their consumption capacity and promoted resilience against poverty, climate induced disasters and conflict-hit areas in the study area. The paper recommends a shift from project-based poverty alleviation toward integrated, governance-centered approaches that support social protection within climate-responsive and anticipatory participatory development frameworks. The case of Mohmand offers broader insights for rethinking poverty reduction strategies in crisis-affected regions across the Global South.*

Introduction

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and merged districts such as Mohmand in particular have experienced conflict, inefficient administrative structure, displacement and institutional fragility due to climate-induced disasters and war-on-terror in the past more than two decades. Owing to this situation, 180,000 people have been displaced from the Mohmand district and settled in other districts of the province (Baig et al.,2024). Most of the families have returned to their areas but still facing livelihood and poor governance of the state-institutions in rehabilitating their housing, livestock, informal support system underpinned resilience in the study area. Furthermore, they have also developed dependency and fragmented welfare service delivery challenges despite the humanitarian and development interventions (Alam, 2019). The prevailing situations coupled with poor governance have created trust gaps between the state institutions and local communities. Resultantly, District Mohmand faces multidimensional poverty caused by the intersectionality of ecological vulnerabilities such as flash floods and droughts etc. Monsoonloods are most common in the monsoon seasons alongside chronic water scarcity driven by declining groundwater levels and unsustainable extraction practices. These environmental pressures disproportionately affect already marginalized populations, particularly

women, who's socially assigned roles in water collection exacerbate time poverty and exposure to psychosocial stress, causing not further inequalities in the region.

Keeping in view the situation, the humanitarian interventions such as United Nations World Food Programmed and Foundation for Rural Development (a local Civil Society Organization) have initiated a Programmed in 2018 called as "Cash for Work". In this program, the vulnerable and poor segments of the community have been selected conditionally through participatory approach. These programs have engaged them in temporary livelihood initiatives such as rehabilitating gully plugs, rainy water ponds, livelihood training, plantation drives etc. these local vulnerable communities have received cash rupees of seven thousand and five hundred to cater their basic needs. This is considered a vital policy intervention to end poverty and promote resilience. However, it also raises basic questions about how effectively these programs were addressing long-term needs of the local communities. This research already identified factors causing poverty in the area such as climate-induced stresses, persistent wars and conflicts in the area and structural impediments consist of both cultural and political. This research identified the intersectionality of poverty with the identified factors as well as the CCT in building resilience against the poverty which will be discussed later one.

Literature Review

Regions across the Global South encountering issues of conflict, environmental challenge and weak institutional strategies are faced by the persistent poverty of diverse forms despite the availability of wide range of social protection programs (Hickey et al., 2020; World Bank, 2023). While CCTs have emerged as effective tool in reducing poverty, their long-term impact on development remains debatable, especially in socially vulnerable and marginalized segments (Bastagli et al., 2019; Banerjee et al., 2017). This study is theoretically based on the capability approach, which reenvision poverty not only as non-possession of money but also as a state framed by powerlessness, limited freedom and non-accessibility to social and educational opportunities (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017). Looking at this phenomenon means reducing poverty by enhancing and improving individuals' potential to obtain standard means of living, rather than just upgrading income resources. Nonetheless, in settings like Pakistan's newly merged districts, constraints faced by the social structures importantly limit the changing capacity of such interventions. Instability of governance policies, colonial mindset and overall negligence toward better living have consequently rendered the insufficient services like poor sanitary and health facilities, low standard education and contaminated drinking water (Gazdar et al., 2020; International Crisis Group, 2022). Due to these deficiencies, it becomes difficult to achieve the goals set by the social protection organizations and the measures that they take to eliminate poverty and deprivation. Along with that environmental stress and climate change further entangles the prevailing poverty situation. Natural disasters like earthquake, flood, water scarcity, deforestation, and land degradation unequally affect underprivileged households, adding to livelihood insecurity and increasing process of fragility (IPCC, 2022; UNDP, 2023). In such conditions, social protection initiatives must not only address economic problems but also environmental challenges and institutional constraints. Knowledge based on the data collected from various sources explains that CCTs can improve consumption stability and, in few cases, help in building social cohesion and harmony, their effectiveness is subject to incorporation within larger frameworks (Holmes & Costella, 2021; Slater & Sabates-Wheeler, 2020). In the absence of such amalgamations, the effectiveness of the said programs remains risky and alienated from the main challenge of addressing the main causes of poverty in society.

Methodology

This study follows pragmatic paradigm of the concurrent triangulation mixed methods to explore subjective and objective side of the phenomena of poverty in the research area. This also assesses the role of the CCT in building resilience against poverty in research areas of District Mohmand. In this method, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed simultaneously. While keeping in view the nature of the study, it adopts abductive epistemological position that draws inferences from the observation and presents it in a logical manner to understand the reality.

As discussed earlier, that intentionality of poverty with both positive and negative factors in areas presents a very complex phenomenon to understand, hence, evolving methodologies in the form of qualitative approach was adopted to avoid linear explanation to the causes of the problems.

Sampling Strategy

So, keeping in view the mixed-method approach, the study follows both simple random and as well as purposive sampling method. In this regard, 341 participants were selected as the program beneficiary of CCT in the study area. This sample was selected to present the objective side of the reality of CCT and poverty in District Mohmand while 30 participants were selected purposively to explain the subjective side of the poverty and subsequent CCT program in the study area. The participants of the study were local community members including both male and female, local community leaders. They have shared their lived experiences of the context of Mohmand facing wars and environmental disasters as well as the effectiveness of the conditional cash transfer program in enabling them to cope with the challenges.

Sampling Design

- **Quant** → Proportionate Stratified Sampling
- **Qual** → purposive sampling

PROJECT NAME	BENEFICIARIES	MALE	FEMALE	SELECTED
Carpet Weaving	60	0	8	<u>8</u>
Check Dam	1406	184	0	<u>184</u>
Fuel Efficient Stove	83	0	11	<u>11</u>
Integrated Pest Management	39	5	0	<u>5</u>
Kitchen Gardening	39	0	5	<u>5</u>
Knitting Work	163	0	21	<u>21</u>
Quilt and Mats Making	439	0	57	<u>57</u>
Rehabilitation of Kacha Road	158	21	0	<u>21</u>
PWDs, Widows & Orphans	191	13	12	<u>25</u>
Water Pond Rehabilitation	26	3	0	<u>3</u>
G. TOTAL	2604	226	114	<u>341</u>

Tools of data collection

As the study follows mixed method, hence, both structured and un-structured interview and questionnaire were administered for collecting the data. The structured interviews focused on the already developed questions and hypotheses supported by the theoretical framework. While, in the un-structured interviews, participants were allowed to present their views and experiences in detail to understand the intersectionality of the CCT and poverty reduction in the area.

Analytical Strategy

Quantitative data was analyzed by using statistical techniques to locate the features related to displacement, poverty and program findings. Recurring themes of resilience, governance and social relations emerged after the thematic analysis of the collected data. The combination of both datasets emerged at the interpretation level, where convergences and divergences between quantitative findings and qualitative discourses were critically investigated. This triangular approach supported the validity of the findings and strengthened the deeper understanding of how CCT interventions function within structurally tensed ambience.

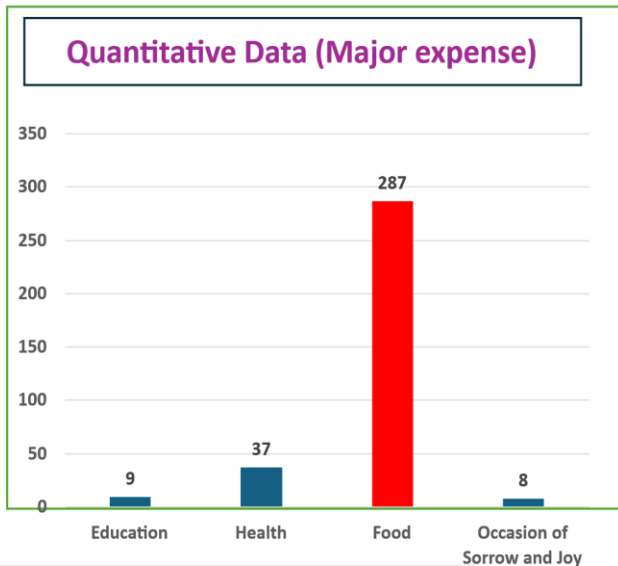
Analysis and Findings

1. Poverty, Displacement, and Layered Vulnerability

This part of the study presents the intersectionality of poverty with displacement due to the war-on-terror in the area and how much they pushed the residents to vulnerability of food shortage, limited livelihood opportunities and climate stress. The study findings indicate that owing to the displace of the local people in Mohmand, they have not only lost their sources of income but also pushed them to the situation where they were unable to find social support of their social networks. Displacement has completely dislocated them and pushed them to structural and systemic web of trappers of poverty. Most of the participants in the study shared that they have spent time in Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) camps where they were completely deprived of the basic needs of health, food and education. Within IDPs camp, all the people have lost their local sources of resilience which was there in the form of food from the land, social support system embedded in their culture. These findings support the thesis that poverty in fragile environment causes cumulative deprivation not stability (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003; World Bank, 2023). This situation has only deprived the affected communities in district Mohmand materially but damaged their capability to cope with the situation (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017).

II. Climate

Climate Crisis and Poverty



Qualitative Data

The poor fulfill their food-related needs through limited job opportunities available

Water Scarcity issues for drinking and agriculture.
 Respondent: "Vs pe Jamee ke ogdai jarai na kege" means that currently, there are less chances of prolonged rain in winter.

Quality of food, education of children and health has been impacted due to food insecurity

02. Causative Factors of Poverty

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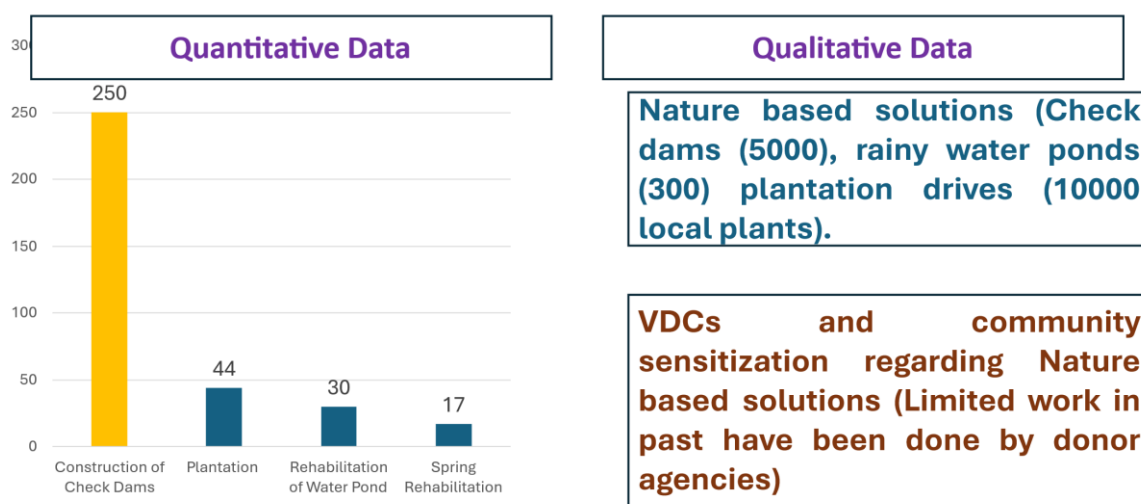
2. Climate Stress and the Limits of Adaptive Capacity

Climate change is identified as a significant cause of poverty, which interacts with underlying vulnerabilities to create what can be described as compound risk environments (IPCC, 2022; UNDP, 2023). The respondents cited frequent exposure to flash floods and drought situations which have both direct and indirect effects on livelihoods. The study concludes that interventions supported by CCT, especially nature-based interventions like check dams, water pond rehabilitation, and plantation drives have led to localized types of climate adaptation. Such projects have minimized short-term dangers to crops and infrastructure and boosted the sustainability of the environment.

Nevertheless, local adaptation also has its boundaries, as the findings also point to (Eriksen et al., 2021). The falling groundwater table and growing water demand are systemic challenges that cannot be solved by project-based interventions only. Notably, women are the most vulnerable to climate stress, with their water-gathering tasks becoming even more difficult in times of deficit. This brings about time poverty forms, and this has its consequences on gender relations (UN Women, 2020).

II. CLIMATE

CCT Role in Community Resilience Against Climate Crisis



03. Role of CCT in Poverty

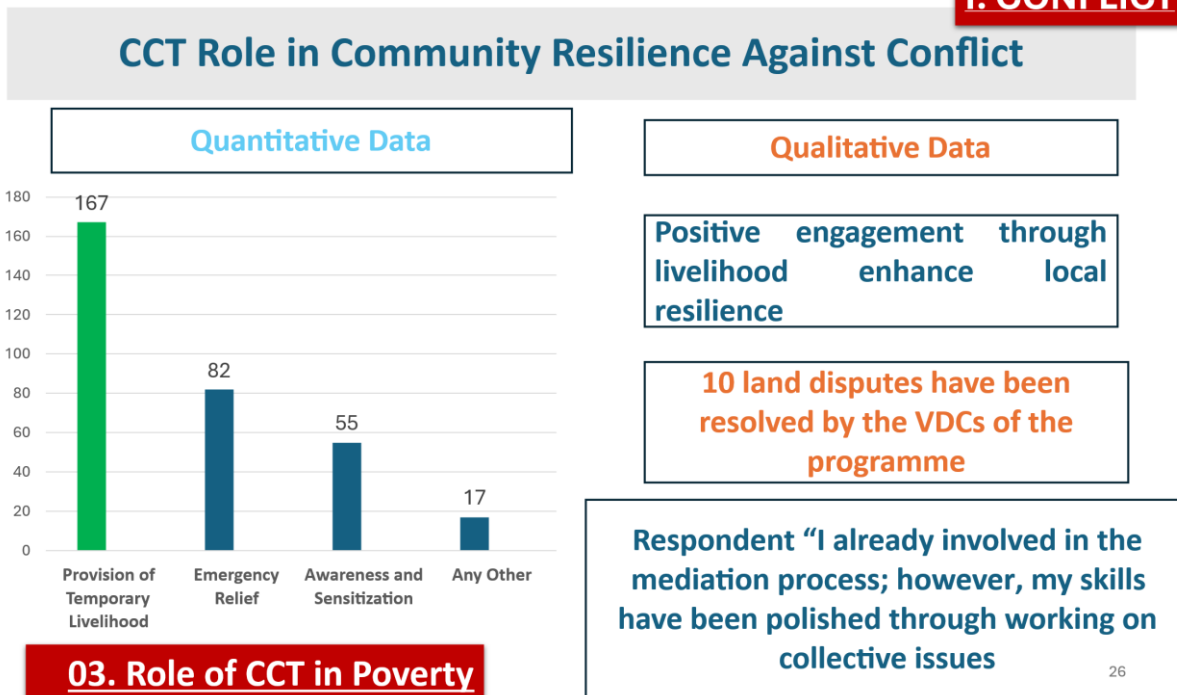
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3. Social Cohesion, Collective Action, and Post-Conflict Recovery

The role of CCT programs in promoting local social cohesion and collective action is one of the most important results of the study. Within an environment of fragmentation and mistrust brought about by conflict, programmed activities that necessitated group involvement provided areas of interaction, negotiation and reconciliation. There is both quantitative and qualitative evidence that community participation in common activities like infrastructure reconstruction was part of restoring trust among the formerly divided communities. In other situations, programmed dialogue was used to solve long-standing conflicts, especially land conflicts, informally. These results suggest that CCT programs have the potential to create social skills that are vital to resilience in the post-conflict environment (Croft et al., 2016; Slater and Sabates-Wheeler, 2020). These abilities are essential to resilience within post-conflict environments, where social disintegration is likely to discredit development initiatives. It is, however, important to note that these gains are weak and relative. The social cohesion that can be created by

temporary interventions might not be converted to long-term stability without long-term institutional support.

I. CONFLICT

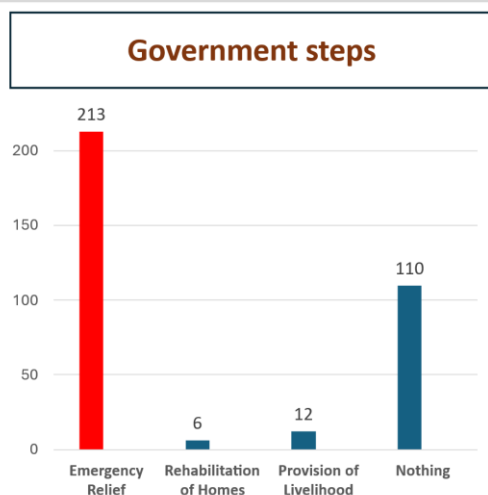


4. Governance, Institutional Gaps, and Structural Constraints

The issue of governance comes out as one of the key determinants of success and constraints in poverty alleviation in Mohmand. Weak institutional presence, limited-service provision, and policy discontinuities were the major factors that led to persistent poverty, as indicated by respondents. Village development committees (VDCs) introduced as part of the CCT programmed is a significant effort to curb the gap in governance through participatory decision-making. Through these committees, community representation became easier and there was a more inclusive distribution of programmed benefits like support of vulnerable groups like widows and daily workers.

However, the results show that there is an underlying contradiction: though CCT programs can temporarily fill the gaps in governance, they are not a replacement for powerful and responsible state institutions. Sustainability of programmed outcomes was a major concern raised by many respondents, especially when there are no government ownership and integration of policy in the long run.

This highlights a crucial point which is that poverty alleviation in weak settings is eventually a question of governance (Hickey et al., 2020; World Bank, 2023). Social protection efforts will not be able to go beyond limited scope and effect without structural reforms that will deal with institutional flaws.

III. GOVERNANCE**CCT Role in Local Governance****Qualitative Data (CCT steps)**

CCT enhance VDCs skills about their basic problems

25 youth, framers and women councilors from the VDC of CCT contested the local government elections in 2022.

03. Role of CCT in Poverty

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Discussion

Conditional cash transfer program provides them with resilience to cope with the multifaced challenges caused by intersectionality of poverty and displacement, climate-stress and conflict in the area. However, the program suffers from structural constraints limiting its effectiveness. Even then, it proves a successful program in improving the short-term consumption ability of the locals and provides them with resilience against the environmental challenges. The program provided them with the ability to make decisions about their internal disputes, livelihoods and income opportunities in the area after rehabilitation in their local communities. They have constructed water-reservoirs for overing the water shortage in the area through CCT initiatives. However, structural constraints such as poor governance, lack of sufficient provision of public services and environmental degradation still limit the formation of long-term capability.

In Global South, Social protection program is normally criticized that instead of creating long-term capabilities to cope with their challenges and fulfill their basic needs, it most causing dependency syndrome. Such program normally addresses the objectives, or material causes of the problems instead of promoting structural reform through good and transparent governance to empower the local communities. In the present situation, the program is unable to address weak institutions, lack of market access, and environmental pressures which are embedded in the structure needs holistic approach to address.

However, despite limited success in addressing structural and embedded problems, it restores trust, solves conflicts, and enhances the local governance practices. Further, this research shows that in the district Mohmand, the CCT programs proved as the agents of resilience, their success will always be determined by the degree to which they are integrated into the coherent governance, climate-sensitive policies, and inclusive institutional structures. Further, The CCT program realized the importance of localized and contextual initiatives to end poverty as in most cases poverty cannot be tackled with imported and external interventions. This study suggests that it is imperative to connect social

protection to climate governance and long-term development planning. Altogether, the example of

Conclusion and Policy Implications

CCT provided opportunities to the local communities in District Mohmand to get abilities and capabilities to cope with the poverty caused by conflict, climate stress, and weak governance. Further, CCT interventions in District Mohmand have played significant roles in reducing poverty in the short term and enhancing local resilience. Though, the overall effectiveness of the program is limited due to the structural and institutional constraints which have not been addressed immediately. The most important finding is the realization and capabilities of the local communities to do something reforming structural impediments (Hickey et al., 2020; UNDP, 2023). Further, the study found paradigm shift from traditional welfare schemes to the cash aid to community-based action, which has led to climate change adaptation, social solidarity, and local participatory governance. Increase in freedom of choices related to households matters to stabilize consumption, restructure livelihoods, and act collectively is the impact of the CCT program in the local communities.

Further, poverty in area cannot be adequately solved by using isolated interventions, instead, it needs a systemic and governance-based strategy. This intervention will incorporate social protection within the wider development strategies through the following policy actions:

1. Coordinated Social Protection actions:

The study recommends policy reform in the form of integrated and coordinated social protection program instead of working in isolation causing least benefit for the end users and causing huge losses of resources. Social protection programs such as Benazir Income Support program normalized as BISP must be compatible with local and provincial programs to provide maximum benefit to the local communities. Fragmented projects and programs must be integrated through a consolidated social protection policy to address the multidimension poverty in extreme vulnerable communities.

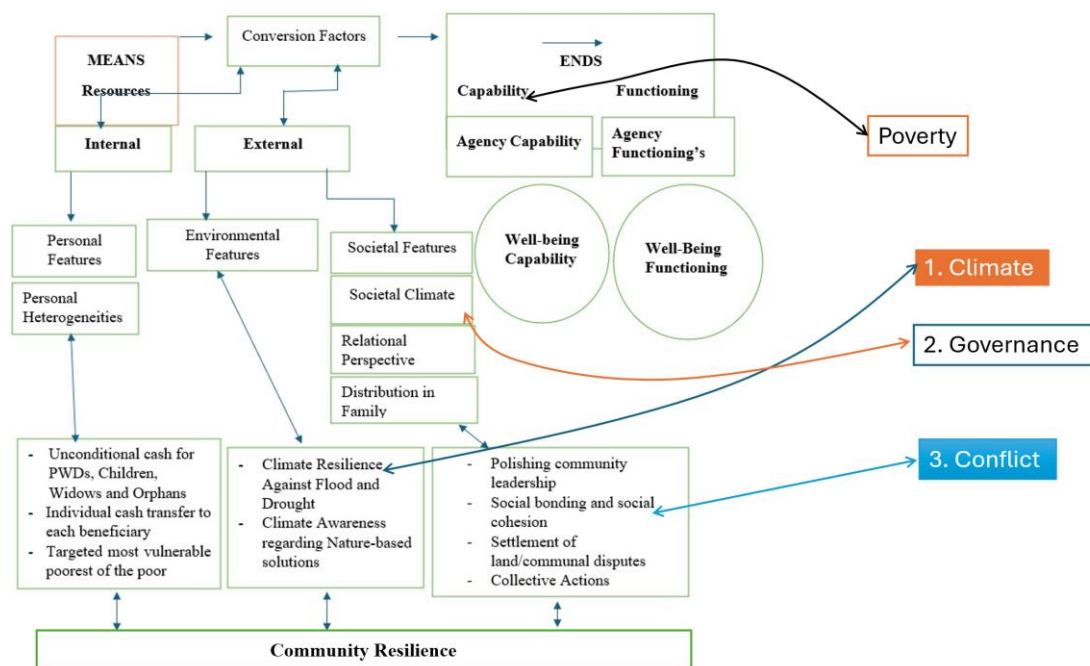
2. Strengthening Local Governance and Ownership

Effective and accountable institutions are critical in sustainable poverty reduction. Mechanisms like Village Development Committee must be institutionalized in the structures of district governance, which would allow continuity, legitimacy, and ownership locally. In the absence of such institutional anchor, programmed gains will tend to be short-term and reversible.

3. Integrating Climate Resilience into Social Policy

Considering the role that environmental stress plays in determining poverty, interventions in the future should focus more on climate-responsive developmental policies by spending more on water management systems, climate-resistant agriculture, and ecosystem rehabilitation. Further, these spending must also promote the diversification of livelihoods and training of skills of the local communities.

Diagram No-7.1 showing the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen



Source: Garces, P. (2021), and additional data added by the researcher

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Concluding Reflection

Conditional Cash Transfers is effective program, however, less useful in structural transformation in District Mohmand. The study concludes that poverty in crisis-stricken areas is not just an issue of lack of income but a symptom of a failed government intersecting with the environmental pressures, and historical marginalization. The study recommends that such programmes should go beyond temporary relief in the form of CCT and transform them into sustainable development. Integrated comprehensive policy frameworks emphasize institutional reform, environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

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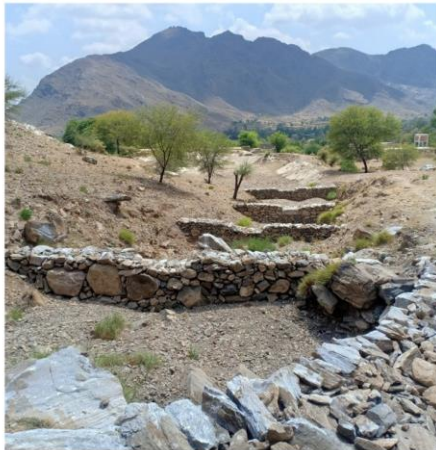
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Appendices:



03. Role of CCT in Poverty

Research Supervisors field visit to Mohmand (2022)



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