

Headline: Social Mobilization is not always smooth sailing

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It was January 13, 2017. I woke up early in the morning and left Hyderabad to reach Tando Allahyar on time to participate in social mobilization activities. I had decided to participate in a session during which Community Organisations are formed.

Today's CO formation meeting was arranged in Chotani Mohala of Masoo Bozdar, Revenue Village Sandiki, and Union Council Masoo Bozdar. I had visited this settlement while preparing a document about the Union Council, during a socio-economic baseline survey.

Masoo Bozdar is the main settlement of Union Council Masoo Bozdar. It has 467 households. 221 households out of the total fall in poverty score range of 0-23, 157 households in 24-34, and 92 households fall in the range of 35-59, while only 7 households are classified in the 60-100 range. As is evident, vast majority of the residents are poor. The settlement looks like a town where most of the amenities are available as compared to other settlements of union council and inhabitants of the area are involved in religious activities due to presence of Madrasa's in settlement.

When I reached Maso Bozdar, I noticed that the locals interdicted the male staff from entering the house. Therefore, Mr. Aslam, Capacity Building Officer (CBO) NRSP, went back to the office. When I entered the house, a female social mobiliser of National Rural Support Programme was busy reading the Term of Partnership (TOP) and other female social mobiliser was writing a resolution and the names of CO member in a record book. I came to know that two COs were being formed by the social organisers simultaneously; Maso Bozdar – 7, having 24 members, and Maso Bozdar – 8, having 23 members, of whom 13 had 0-23 poverty scorecard ranking.

It was Friday afternoon. I was surprised to see the meeting location where CO formation activity was being carried on. The place was near a Mosque. The deafening voice of the Khutba/sermon could be heard inside loudly and clearly. I thought this might be the only space available in the area where members had agreed to attend meeting. This wasn't an appropriate space for meeting though. None, but those sitting closest to the mobilizers, could hear them.

I also noticed a lot of friction and distrust among the CO members. Selecting/electing the President and Manager of the CO became very difficult, due to lack of trust.

In villages, generally, the inhabitants trust each other because of homogeneity and mutual interest. But, here the situation was different and a little bit complex.

Once the Manger and President were selected after a lot of discussions, hesitations, the members were not ready to trust the President, because of her husband's drug addiction issue. More discussions and assurances had to be given to the members, who finally, agreed to pay 10 rupees each, as their CO's first saving. 240 rupees were collected on the first day.

After the CO Masoo Bozdar seven was formed and the second CO's formation was in process, a woman barged in. She was a member of the CO, but not present during the entire process. She stood up and expressed distrust over the members and the entire community. She caused some tension by saying that none was trust worthy in the community, and that the saving system will not work. "This will only cause more distress for us", she said. After saying this, she demanded that her name be removed from the membership of the CO. Her demand was fulfilled by the CO.

Situation of trust and cooperation may vary from ward to ward in this settlement.6 Community Organisation were formed before 13 January, 2017, two COs were formed on 13 January 2017 and further four COs were to be formed in the near future. Maso Bozdar will have 12 COs in total. The reactions and situations will vary from one CO to the other.

I will keep an eye on them, especially CO Maso Bozdar – 7, to see how the organisation evolves and performs in the future by resolving issues of the people, and whether it is able to create a cohesive community or not.

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