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Empowerment and legitimization of effected communities in post-disaster reconstruction

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to establish the key role of power and legitimacy attributes in effective community participation in post-disaster reconstruction (PDR) projects.
Design/methodology/approach – The research applies a qualitative research approach in conjunction with a case study method, using semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling techniques. The principal source of data were semi-structured interviews of affected community members and other stakeholders of a post-natural disaster reconstruction project initiated in the aftermath of 2005 devastating earthquake in Pakistan. The interviews were undertaken between October and December 2016.
Findings – Participation of affected community is significant for the success of a PDR projects; however effective participation cannot be ensured without empowerment and legitimization. In context of post disaster reconstruction; both, power and legitimacy attributes have a direct effect on effective participation of the community.
Originality/value – This paper has explored the relationship of stakeholder's attributes with participation and have also proposed an attribute model for future PDR projects. Adoption of attribute model will enhance the chances of success of future PDR projects.

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Keywords: Stakeholder; Participation; Reconstruction; Power; Legitimacy; Urgency; Salience; Disaster Management; Pakistan

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1. Introduction

Stakeholder theory, introduced by RE Freeman in 1984, has become a popular and widely used theory in management scholarship [2, 3]. Stakeholder is an individual or group who can affect or can be affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives [4]. Mitchell et al. (1997:p853) mentioned that stakeholder theory is articulated in the basic principal

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– who or what really counts? In this principal who or what is the stakeholder and it provides the guideline to the managers about 'to whom they must pay attention', however it is very difficult for an organization to identify stakeholders and their interests [5]. In order to identify the stakeholders and their interests, Mitchell et al (1997) presented attribute model and identified three basic attributes of stakeholders i.e. Power, Legitimacy and Urgency. Several researchers used these attributes to describe stakeholder theory in project management and other fields or research [6]. The interests of stakeholders could be catered to through their active involvement as suggested by participation theory. Participatory theory requires that individuals who are affected by a decision, should be fully, fairly and democratically involved in the normative process of decision making [7]. The new century is more stakeholder focused and both, stakeholder theory and participation theory advocates catering to the needs and interests of stakeholders and their involvement in the decision making process. Overall stakeholder theory in conjunction with participatory theory provides guidelines for practitioners; and have accentuated the notion that participation of stakeholders could impact positively. Theory can be developed and examined in a particular context [8], therefore, this research paper, through a qualitative research approach and case study design, and remaining within the boundaries of stakeholder and participatory theory, investigates the relationship of power and legitimacy attributes with affective participation of affected community in a specific context of post-natural disaster reconstruction. A community that has been affected by a disaster, naturally has the 'urgency' attribute, however, power and legitimacy is also needed to perform their role more effectively to ensure success and sustainability of a PDR project. This research has also proposed an attribute model for implementation of future PDR projects. This model will ensure effective participation of the affected community, which ultimately increases the chances of success and sustainability of a PDR project.

2. Background

This section provides overview of stakeholder theory, participation theory and brief introduction to research setting/context in order to clearly understand the background and objective of this research study.

2.1 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory has burgeoned in recent years and has gained centrality in management research [4, 9]. In contrast to the traditional business objective of the profit oriented firms – maximization of return on investment to the owners – the stakeholder theory asserts that business should also consider the interests of individuals or groups affected by the business [3]. Research by Mitchell et al. (1997) presented three attributes; Power, Legitimacy and Urgency; to identify stakeholders and their salience and interests. They described 'salience' as a measure to associate their significance as perceived by the managers. In other words, stakeholder salience is the degree to which managers give priority to each stakeholder's claim [10]. Power is "A relationship among social actors in which one social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not have otherwise done"; legitimacy as "A generalized perception or assumption that the actions of any entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" and urgency as "The degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention" ([2]p:869-871). On the basis of these three basic attributes, Mitchell et al. (1997) divided stakeholders into eight different groups. The stakeholders with only one attribute – Dormant, Demanding and Discretionary – has the low salience. The salience of Dangerous, Dominant and Dependent is moderate because of having combination of two attributes. The 'Definitive Stakeholders' are the only stakeholders who claims all three attributes and possess the high salience. Therefore, role of definitive stakeholder cannot be avoided or compromised [2].

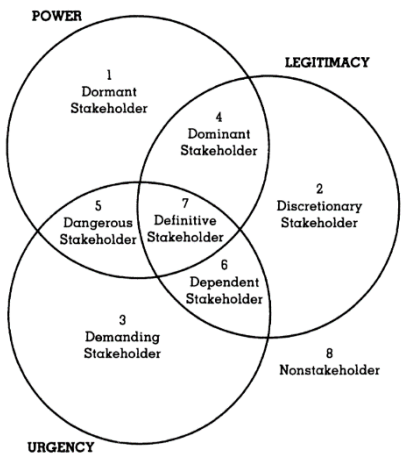


Figure 1: Different groups of stakeholders on the basis of three basic attributes – Source [2]p:874

This seminal contribution of Mitchell et al. (1997) gained attention of numerous subsequent researchers to deliberate the role of stakeholders in various research fields including strategic management [11], corporate social responsibility [12], project management [6, 10], stakeholder management and participation [13, 14], crisis management [15], environmental management [13]

and risk management [16]. Many of these research studies endorsed the findings of Mitchell et al. (1997) and find stakeholders' attributes useful to determine their salience; however a few researchers criticized the salience model due to a lack of dynamics in the stakeholder relationship [9]; demeaning role of dependent stakeholders [17]; absence of networks and interaction among different stakeholders [18] and suitability of measure [14]. A few researchers including Chandrasekhar (2012), Eskerod et al. (2015) and Mojtahedi and Oo (2017b) believe that influence of stakeholder attributes on project performance needs further research. In addition, research is also needed to explore how stakeholders can be empowered, and legitimized to strengthen their role in a certain context.

2.2 Participation theory

Although, participation approach was introduced in the development sector long ago, it gained significance in 1950s and by 1960, through the efforts of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), it was largely adopted by more than 60 countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America [19]. It reflects an ideology that constitutes shared understandings of a decision making process, that should be inclusive, democratic and cooperative instead of individualist, competitive or driven my personal or organizational motives [7]. The first and foremost theory that explained different level of participation in public sector development projects was introduced by Arnstein in 1969 [20]. Subsequent studies of Choguill (1996) and Davidson et al (2007) used this research and proposed ladder of community participation in post-natural disaster housing reconstruction context (Fig. 2). The ladder of community participation depicts that if the community is involved in the decision making process and they are empowered enough to implement their decisions, thus they have full control over the project. On the other hand, if the community is consulted about their requirements and needs but there is no assurance that their opinion will be taken into account or manipulated to achieve vested interests of other stakeholders, they have no control over the project [1]. Some subsequent research used this ladder to analyse community participation and its effect on the outcome of a project [21].

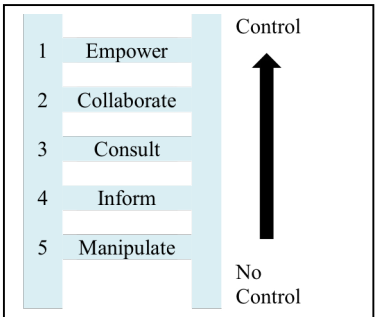


Figure 2: Ladder of community participation (Source:[1]:103)

2.3 Research setting

Natural disasters are one of the oldest concerns of human kind [22]. It is commonly understood that there is no way to avoid natural disasters and its negative impact upon humans, however, efforts can be made to reduce its impact through effective disaster management practices [23]. Disaster management includes different phases namely prediction, warning, emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction [24]. Reconstruction is the long term phase, which aims at restoration of infrastructure and services, revitalization of the economy, social and cultural life [24]. Researchers have identified a large number of stakeholders in reconstruction including, government, donors, NGOs, CBOs, media, professionals, academia, private and corporate sector, beneficiaries, volunteers and affected community. The affected community have been considered as a significant stakeholder in PDR project; therefore their involvement is very important for the success and sustainability of PDR projects [25]. Naturally, the affected community has the 'urgency' attribute and if community is involved in the decision making process and have the authority to implement their decisions, then it is considered 'empowered' and 'legitimized' and could be categorized as the 'Definitive stakeholder'. However, if the community is consulted but their opinion is manipulated to achieve vested interests of other stakeholders and have no control over the project they are considered as dependent or demanding stakeholder. This situation can result in a project that is at risk and can produce compromised result. This scenario has been witnessed in some recent PDR projects being implemented in developing countries [1]. This non-participation is conceivably the result of an absence or lack of power and legitimacy attribute. It is perceived that power and legitimacy attributes have direct relationship with the active participation; however this discourse has been examined in this research study.

2.4 Case study: New Balakot city development project

The October 8, 2005 earthquake was one of the most catastrophic disasters in the history of Pakistan [26]. The magnitude of tremor on the Richter scale was 7.6, and it affected about 30,000 km^2 area. Around 86,000 people were dead, 80,000 were severely injured and more than 3.5 million people were left homeless [26, 27]. Balakot is located in

the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan with a population of 80,000 people. It was 30 km away from the epicentre and was one of the most affected city [27]. After the emergency rescue phase, the government of Pakistan established the earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction authority (ERRA) in 2005 [28] for post disaster reconstruction [29]. Subsequently, ERRA initiated a reconstruction project named "New Balakot City Development (NBCD) Project" to provide a safe haven to disaster struck people of the area. This project was started in 2007 at an estimated cost of Rs. 12.00 billion (equivalent to US $200 Million) at an area spread over 770 Hectors of land [30]. International donors including Gadaffi Foundation of Libya and government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and government of Kuwait committed the funding for the project [31]. The project was supposed to provide housing for about 5000 families. As per plan, the project was initiated in 2007 [30] and the completion date was July, 2010 [31].

3. Research methodology

In order to explore the effect of stakeholder's attributes using Mitchel et al.'s (1997) stakeholder's attribute and salience framework, a qualitative research approach in conjunction with case study method was used. Qualitative research has a long, distinguished history in the human disciplines [32] and it is recognized as 'the word science'; because it relies on 'words' or 'stories' that people tells to the researchers [33]. Similarly, case study is a qualitative research method, which is used to investigate the holistic and meaningful characteristics of a real life event [34]. Interviews of the affected community and other stakeholders of case study projects are the main source of data in this research study. Inclusion of various stakeholders helped to look into the phenomenon from different perspective and also serve the purpose of triangulation and ensure trustworthiness of research. Interviews were semi-structured comprising predesigned open-ended questions. Purposive sampling method was used in order to get deeper insight from target respondents. Participation in this study was voluntary and informed permission was obtained. Table 1 provides summary of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in the local language, digitally recorded, translated and transcribed by one of the researcher, who is native to the project area and understand local language and culture. At the outset, both researchers read and coded the data independently in order to ensure validity. The transcribed data of interview along with other relevant project information and observations were coded and analysis undertaken utilising Nvivo software. The qualitative analysis software Nvivo was used for the coding and data analysis phase and to maintain uniformity and traceability of data. The conformity, coherence of codes, concepts and categories is very important aspects for a valid analysis of data [35]. The interview transcripts were evaluated several times in order to identify what general ideas and information had been shared by the respondent. Similar general ideas and information shared by different respondents were encoded together using Parent and Child nodes. Finally, several themes discussing real problems and their solutions proposed by the stakeholders were developed.

Table 1: Interviewees (Source: Author)

Sr. No.	Stakeholders / Role	No. of Respondents	Respondents
1	Affected community	5	R 1 – 5
2	Project implementation team member (contractor)	1	R 6
3	Project implementation team member (executing agency)	1	R 7
4	Government official	1	R 8
5	Local political leader	1	R 9
6	Local community leader	1	R 10
7	Local social worker	1	R 11

4. Findings and discussion

Project documents reflects that the initial completion date of project was 2007, which was revised to 2010 and then 2012; however at the date of undertaking this research the project is still in the implementation phase. The cost of the project has escalated from Rs. 12.00 billion (US$ 200 million) to Rs. 14.2 billion (US$ 236 million). A recent report revealed that ERRA has acquired only 15 percent of project land [36]. Moreover, due to severe clashes among government agencies and local land owners, the work on the project was also remained suspended for about a year time (from September 2009 to October 2010). Beside the fact that the project has immense importance for the affected community; it is facing substantial delays, snail pace progress, increase in cost, clashes among local land owners and the project team, dearth of commitment and lack of interest of its stakeholders including, management team (consultants, contractors, relevant government offices), political leaders, national and provincial government [28, 37].

4.1 Existing stakeholder

The project was funded by the Government of Pakistan and international donors including government of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya. ERRA was the executing agency for the NBCD project and was responsible for decision making on behalf of government of Pakistan. ERRA hired services of local consulting firms and contractors to implement the project [38]. A small part of project land was owned by the provincial forest department; however the major portion was owned by the local population of 'Bakrial'. Affected community and local political leaders including members of the provincial and national assemblies are also the important stakeholders of the project. Affected community, government (provincial and national), donors (Government of Pakistan, Libya, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia), executing agency (ERRA), contractor, consultants, local politicians and community leaders are the existing stakeholders of the project. Immediately after the catastrophic 2005 earthquake, international donors pledged to provide funding for the project; however, political and economic instability in gulf region and Aran peninsula due to NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, changed the international scenario and also resulted in discontinuation of foreign funding for the project. Therefore international donors are no longer active stakeholders of the project. Government of Pakistan is the only source of funding for the project, now. The provincial forest department donated the land for the project; however acquisition of land owned by the local population remained an issue since initiation of the project, till now [31, 37]. Considering the direct impact of land owners on successful completion of the project they are considered significant stakeholders of the project. Likewise, influence of both national and provincial governments and local politicians in implementation of the project could not be demeaned; however considering the focus of this research study, salience of affected community in accordance with stakeholder and participatory theory needs to be analyzed in detail.

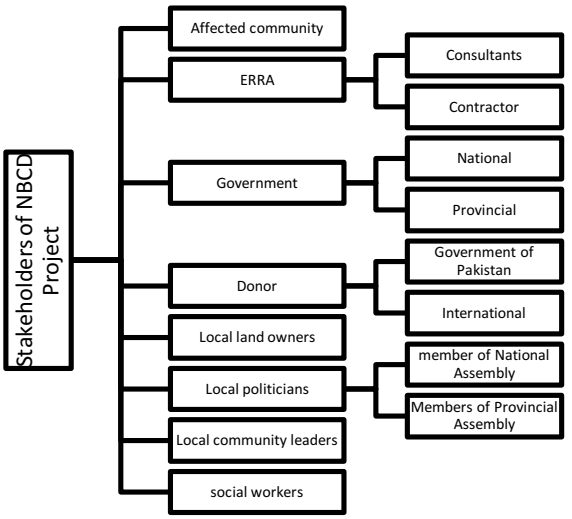


Figure 3: Existing stakeholders of NBCD project

4.2 Assessment of affected community's salience

The project was initiated after a social impact assessment survey and in order to cater the needs and requirements of the affected community; however community was not given any active role in the project. Relocation of the community to a safe area was the basic objective of this project, but the achievement of this objective is still a far dream. The worst aspect of the delay in project completion is that the affected community is still living in the area which was declared 'red zone' due to high possibility of future disasters. Furthermore, the expectations they have developed towards the project are restricting them to seek any other alternate for safe abode. Before the earthquake, the inhabitants of the Balakot city were earning their livings mostly from tourist activities being situated on main road to northern part of the country. However the new site selected for the relocation of the local population is off the tourists route [39]. Likewise the local community and land owners of the selected location were also not consulted at the time of decision making. The economic issue could have easily been catered for through involvement of local community in decision making, while selecting the relocation site. Involvement of community could have resulted in the selection of a more suitable site for the project and disputes with the local community could have been avoided through greater involvement in the decision making process. One of the interviewees mentioned:

> *"….. selection of project site at a distant place from existing city is an issue for majority of the community members. It seems like government's institutions are taking decisions in their own interests but not for sake of us. A resettlement site close to the main road could be a better option for continuation of the tourism related economic activities of local population"*

The relocation to a new place potentially having low income generation opportunities is a serious concern for most of the community members. Therefore, the community members are not satisfied with the selection of the project site. In

addition, some of them are of the view that their interests have been manipulated by the decision makers in order to satisfy their own interests. "Manipulation" is the lowest level of community participation and reflects absence of both, power and legitimacy attributes. Likewise, the issue of land acquisition is also a source of dissatisfaction among the community members and also hindering the progress of the project. The local land owners, in the initial stage, pledged to provide the land free of cost, however at a later stage they refused to do so. This situation caused serious issues among local land owners and executing agencies and resulted in a law and order problem causing the death of one person [40]. Subsequently, ERRA offered plots in the new city in addition to other monetary compensation for land; but the landowners refused to vacate the land due to their cultural and social norms and values. Therefore, acquisition of land for the project is yet not completed. This issue also requires extensive consultation with both, the affected community and local land owners. According to one respondent from the affected community group:

"…. both communities shares same cultural norms and values and has close relationship with each other. The issue of land acquisition could be resolved through involvement of affected community in negotiation process with the land owners. We share same culture, norms and values and can easily convince them to vacate land…."

Another issue discussed by community members and some other stakeholders is the lack of interest of ERRA and local politicians in completion of the project. The changed political scenario at national and provincial level also affected the progress of the project. At the time of the data collection, the ruling party at provincial level (Tehreek-e-Insaaf) is the major opposition party at national level; therefore a conflict of interest exists between both ruling parties. ERRA, being a national level agency controlled by national government (ruling party is Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz group), repeatedly pointed out that the provincial government is responsible for acquisition of land for project; however, due to indifferent political interests of the ruling party of the province, acquisition of land is still not completed. Moreover, terrorist activities in Pakistan, particularly in the KP province, resulted in diversion of attention of both national and provincial government. Nonetheless local member of national and provincial assemblies are also not making the project a priority due to changed political scenario of the project area. One of the respondents said:

"…The ERRA is not taking project seriously. Most of the high officials of ERRA are retired army officers and they are just enjoying luxury life after retirement and are not interested in completion of the project…"

Local political leaders are also looking after their political interests, only. Local members of parliament do not want to lose their votes by vacating local land owners and their families from the area. Instead of performing their positive role for problem solving and quick implementation of the project, they are not supporting any strict decision against the land owners. In sum, if not all, many of the problems the project is facing are due to the ineffective role of the community in the decision making and implementation of the project. Detailed analysis of data helped to draw an attributive map of the existing stakeholders (Fig. 4). By default the affected community has the urgency attribute, which is the one and only attribute they have. The affected community was neither empowered nor legitimized; therefore they are just a passive recipient instead of an active participant. The discussion in preceding section shows that local land owners, consultants, provincial government, local politicians and political leaders have the legitimacy attribute and can indirectly affect the decision making process; however they do not have urgency and power. Similarly donors and contractors also has the power to influence the decision making and implementation of the project but legitimacy and urgency attributes are missing with them thus could be categorized as discretionary stakeholder. So, salience of affected community, donors, provincial government, contractors, consultants, local land owners, local politicians and political leaders is low. On the other hand ERRA, being an executing agency and national government as the major fund provider have both power and legitimacy attributes. However, due to changed priorities and an apparent lack of interest, both stakeholders do not has the urgency attribute. Therefore, ERRA and national government are the dominant stakeholders. Local community leaders being part of the affected community have the urgency attribute and they are empowered by the community members to follow the project on their behalf, thus they could be considered empowered. However, this power attribute cannot help them to influence the decision making or implementation of

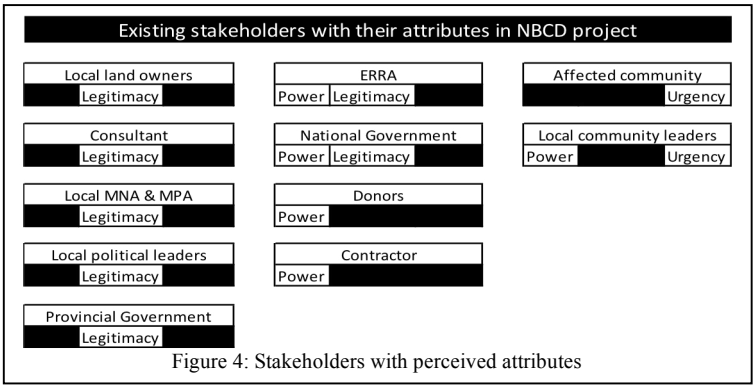
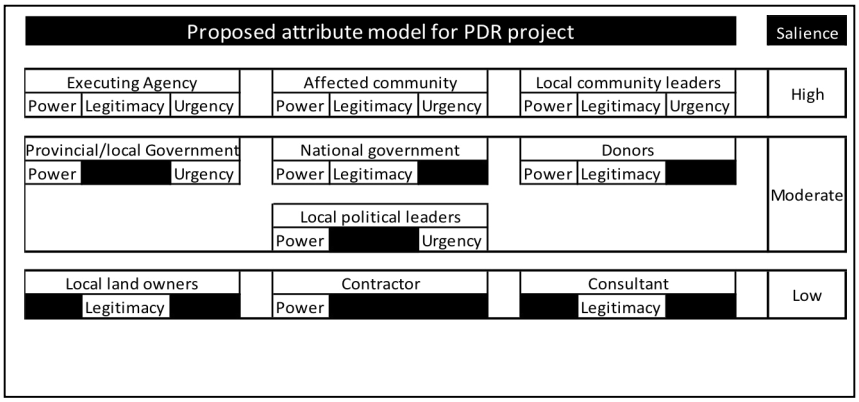


Figure 4: Stakeholders with perceived attributes

the project. Consequently, local community leaders could be considered as dangerous stakeholders. Having a combination of two attributes, salience of ERRA, national government and local community leaders is moderate. It is evident that none of the stakeholders possess all three attributes to be qualify as a definitive stakeholder. Significance of community participation in the success and sustainability of PDR projects have been widely discussed and recommended in contemporary research; however without a definitive stakeholder – having all three attributes – affected community could not perform their role. On the basis of stakeholder and participatory theory, the proposed salience model for successful implementation of a PDR project is presented in next section.

4.3 Proposed network

Detailed analysis of case study project revealed that the affected community did not participate at any stage of project planning or implementation, because of the absence of power and legitimacy attributes. Considering a big scale PDR project, affected community could be as large as thousands of people and coordination and consultation is not possible with the entire community; therefore the role of formal or informal local community leaders is very important. Similarly, executing agency is responsible for all decision makings pertaining to implementation of the project and should be treated as an important stakeholders. So, a definitive group of stakeholders having all three stakeholder attributes should consist of the affected community, community leaders and executing agency. Role of national government, donors, provincial government and local politicians cannot be diminished. National government has the authority – combination of power and legitimacy – to implement the decision in the larger interest of the country. National government and donors could be categorized as dominant stakeholder because of having the required authority to implement their decision. Provincial or local government should treat the local community's needs and requirement on priority and should have the urgency and power attribute. Provincial government being dangerous stakeholder should cater for the immediate needs of the community and take its fulfilment on priority. The local political leaders should advocate the priorities of the communities in appropriate forums including the floor of national or provincial assemblies. The role of political leaders as dominant stakeholder is very important. The salience of national government, donors, provincial government and local political leaders is moderate. From the case study project we have identified local land owners, contractors and consultants as discretionary and dormant stakeholders with low salience because of having only one attribute but this group, depending on the project, can include many other stakeholders like suppliers, local business owners, beneficiaries, end users, researchers, media, social workers, volunteers and religious leaders. Similarly, role of NGOs in reconstruction could not be overlooked; however it depends on the scenario and NGO fit into a role of donor, executing agency, community's advocate or a facilitator. Depending upon nature of the project, stakeholders of a project could be large in number. However, exclusion of their view point has been considered as a limitations of this research. The proposed model for successful implementation of PDR projects needs further research to be proved as appropriate.



5. Conclusion

The objective of this research paper was to investigate relationship between effective participation of the community with power and legitimacy attributes. In this research, it was apparent that the case study project is facing severe problems due to passive involvement of the community. The ladder of community participation represents that community should be 'empowered' in order to take full control of the project; however in the case study project, the community participation was at the lowest level of participation, because of absence of power and legitimacy attributes. By default, community possess urgency attribute; however effective participation could not be ensured without power and legitimacy attributes. A framework for future PDR projects has also been proposed in this research. Adoption of this proposed framework, empowerment and legitimization of the affected community could be ensured, that would

not only result in their active participation but will also ensure success and sustainability of the project.

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