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Natural Resources Management: A case
study of Hilkot Watershed Mansehra**

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AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILES OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN HILKOT WATERSHED MANSEHRA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to develop and describe socioeconomic profiles of the rural community in the Hilkot Watershed Mansehra engaged in natural resources management practices. The study reveals that population living in the sample area have diverse cultural and ethnic background. Mainly population consists of Gujars (58.75%), Swati (33.12%), Syeds (6.87%), Awans (1.87%). Major occupation in the sample area: farming, (47.5%), farming with service (19.37%), service (19.37%), farming with business (6.25%), business (4.37%), and labor (3.12%). The study witnessed uneven landholding with thirty six percent of the population are owners, 8% owner-cum-tenants, 49% were tenants, and 7% landless. 72.7% of the owners have less than 200 kanals or 8 acres of land (average), 15.15% had land holdings between 200-500 kanals or 25-62.5 acres (average), while about 12% are big landlords holding more than 500 kanals or more than 62.5 acres of land. The average household size is 8.4 where 51.3% were male and 48.7% were female. Generally the standard of living is very low. Mostly people are uneducated. The study found lower literacy in female than male. The literacy rate in Gugar community was too low. The community needs programs for their socio-economic uplift which would have positive impact on community's natural resource management practices.

Key Words: Analysis, Community, Natural Resources Management, Profiles; Rural, Socioeconomic, Watershed

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INTRODUCTION

Active involvement of communities in natural resource management is an important factor to achieve sustainable development objective. A sound and sustainable socio-economic conditions ensures better standard of living which helps communities better understand the environment they are living in and adopt practices that helps in better management of available community resources. Standard of living can be assessed through understanding of the socioeconomic background and ways of life of a community. Information and databases on biophysical, social and economic institutions, socio-economic conditions help initiate and develop plans needed to achieve the above stated objectives. The study area of Hilkot watershed is located in Mansehra District of Hazara Division, NWFP Pakistan, The total geographical area of the this community is 1600 hectare and the total population is 7500: 51% are male and 49% are female. The overall literacy rate is 37%, lower than the national average of 48%. Agriculture, forestry and remittances are the main sources of livelihood in the area. Climatically, the area falls in humid temperate zone with elevation ranges between 1450-2600m (District Population Census Report, 1998).

Hilhorst and Klatter, (1985), reviewed measuring rural welfare and changes in rural well being using social indicators. Elements of rural welfare were stated as health; levels of income and consumption; conditions of work; literacy and skills; social adjustment; individual security; and beliefs, customs and standards of behavior. Osman, 1985, used social indicators to demonstrate regional differences within the U.K. in regard to specific issues. Dillman and Hobbs, (1982), analyzed social indicators including community services, employment, education, housing, health, food and nutrition, and crime and prevention. James, *et al.*, (2002), examined geographic variation in illegal drug purchase opportunity among young people living in the United States; there was a subfocus on age, sex, and urban/rural residence. Hodge, *et al.*, (2001), explored the relationship between substance use and spirituality and religious participation with a multicultural sample of rural youths in the American Southwest. Donnermeyer, *et al.* (2002), examined the relationship of drug use with the social and economic characteristics of rural communities in New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

The present study has been designed to analyze the socioeconomic profiles of the residents of Hilkot watershed, Mansehra where their livelihood security system was mainly dependent on natural resources management practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

District Mansehra was the universe of the study and it has been carried out during 2008. Eleven villages of Hilkot watershed have been selected for the relevant informations. In each of the eleven villages of the watershed, 17% of the households were interviewed. Stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the primary data. A sample of size 160 was used of which female respondents comprised 50% of the total respondents. Primary data was personally collected from the respondents through questionnaire. For the analysis, simple averages, graphs, charts, classification and tabulation has been used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following important results regarding the socioeconomic profiles of the rural community engaged in natural resources management practices were observed.

Existence of different Ethnic Groups

There existed three main ethnic groups in Hilkot watershed i.e. Swati, Syed, Gujars and Awan. Agricultural land and forests were mostly owned by Swatis and Syeds. Gujars were mostly tenants. The fourth group residing in lower parts of the watershed was mostly landless and was involved in business activities. In the research area, 58.75% were Gujars, 33.12% were Swatis, 6.87% were Syeds and 2% were Awans (Fig. 1).

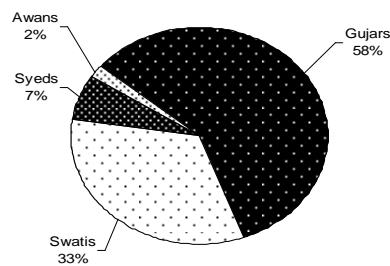


Fig. 1 Different ethnic groups in Hilkot watershed Mansehra

Professions

Agriculture was the profession of the majority (47.5%) of the household heads in the area. About 19% were engaged in government jobs besides agriculture and about the same percentage of the households were dependent on private service in big cities. About 6.25% of the respondents were involved in business along with agriculture. Farming was being carried out on commercial basis and mostly vegetables were cultivated for this purpose. In upper parts of the watershed where Gujar were residing, livestock farming was also important profession of the people. Small-scale businesses like shop keeping in the local market and driving small vehicles as public transport were also practiced by 4.37% of the respondents. A few people (3.12%) also used to work as labor in the area (Fig. 2).

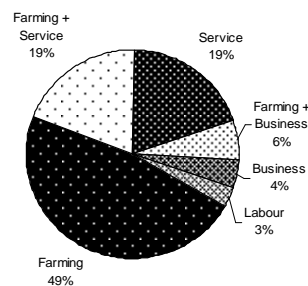


Fig. 2 Respondents distribution according to professions

Land tenancy

According to the survey 36 % of the population of the area was owners, 49% were tenants, 8 % were owner-tenants and 7% were landless (Fig. 3).

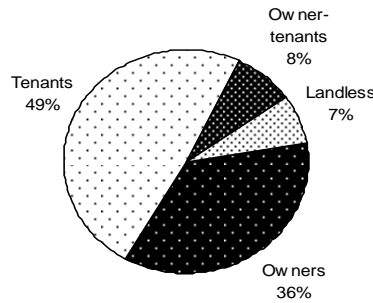


Fig. 3 Respondents distribution according to tenurial status

Swati and Syeds who were residing in the lower parts of the watershed were mostly the owners of agricultural, range and forest land. On the other hand Gujars were mostly tenants and used to pay a fixed proportion of the produce to the owners called “Qalang”, which was usually one fourth of the total grain produce. There was also emerging a third tenurial group i.e owner cum tenants. They owned small tracts of land, which they had bought from the Swatis, and at the same time they also cultivated some land as tenant.

Housing Condition

According to survey, all the people had their own houses. About 42% had pakka homes whereas 58% possessed kachha homes made up of mud and stones having wooden roofs. In swati and Syed communities, about 59% of the sampled respondents had pakka homes and 41% had kachha homes whereas in Gujar community 23% had pakka homes while 77% had kachha homes. The average size of the homes in the watershed was 5.81 Marlas out of which the average covered area was 4.75 Marlas. In Swatis and Syeds the average home size was 6.3 Marlas whereas in Gujars the average size of the home was 4.75 Marlas (Fig. 4).

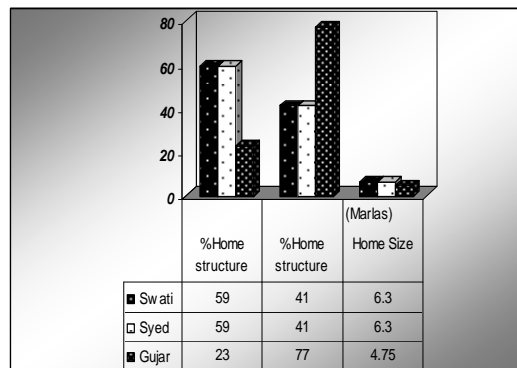


Fig. 4 Distribution of respondents according to housing structure

Size of Land Holdings

The small landholders mostly occupied the area. About 72.72% of the owners had less than 200 kanals of total land holding, 15.15% had land holdings between 200-500 kanals and only about 12% were big landlords who had more than 500 kanals of land. The average land holding for irrigated and rainfed agricultural land were 10 and 96 kanal respectively while for forest and rangeland this average was 107 and 46 kanal respectively. In case of tenants the average land cultivated per household was about 10 kanals. It is worth mentioning here that in Swati and Syed communities, married women were also owners of lands which they had received either from their husbands as dowry or from their parents in inheritance. However, they do not have any say in the management of such lands, which were managed and cultivated either by their husbands or parents. However, at the time of sale of such land their consent was needed. The data revealed that in Swati community the average land owned by women was 8.3 kanals whereas this figure was 5.5 in the Syed community (field survey).

Household Size

In the sampled households 51.3% were male and 48.7% were female. The average household size was 8.4 (Table I). The data also indicated that the average male number per household was estimated 4.3 persons (51% of the household size) and that of female number was 4.09 person (49% of the household).

Table I. Household distribution according to gender

Gender	% age of respondents	Average/household
Male	51.3	4.30
Female	48.7	4.09
Total	100	8.39

Source: Field survey

Literacy Level

The average literacy rate in the area was found to be about 46.7%, average literacy rate of male members of the Swati and Gujar communities was approximately 59% and that of female was about 40%. In Swati and Syed communities, literacy level in men and women was 73% and 58% respectively whereas in Gujar community it was found to be 49 % and 33 % respectively (Fig. 5).

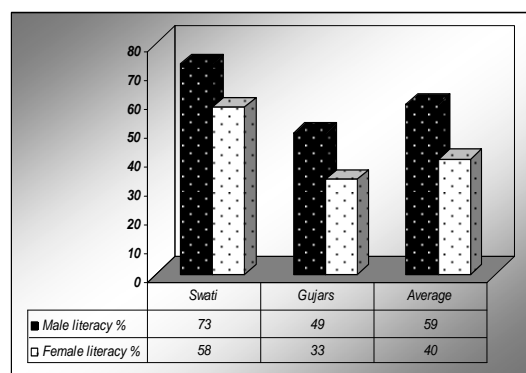


Fig. 5 Literacy level in both Swati and Gujar community

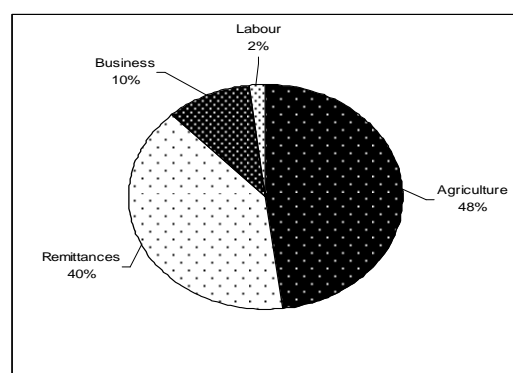


Fig. 6 Distribution of respondents according to their sources of income

Income and Expenditures

In the study area about 39% of the respondents have monthly income less than Rs. 3000. About 32% have monthly income of Rs.3000 – 6000 and about 28% have monthly income more than Rs. 6000 (field survey). Agriculture was the main source of income for about 48% of the respondents whereas remittances were main source of income for about 40% of the respondents. About 10% depended on business for their earnings while only 2% were depended on labor for earning their livelihoods (Figure-VI). According to the survey, the monthly expenditures were less than Rs.3000 for 47.5% of the respondents. About 37.5 % have monthly expenditures in the range of Rs.3000 – 6000 whereas 15 % have monthly expenditures more than Rs.6000. On the average, consumption on food item was 62% of total expenditures followed by fuel as 18%, health 8%, education 6% and miscellaneous 6% (field survey).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed the main ethnic groups in the research area i.e. Swatis, Syeds, Gujars and Awans. Agriculture was the main source of livelihood of the community. The status of land holding may generate fragmentation of holdings. Major portion of the respondents were found tenants and many of them used to live in kaccha homes. Male population observed was more as compared to female population. Males were found more educated as compared to female. Agriculture was the main source of income and food item was the major head of expenditures. The Government should focus on female education, housing conditions and consolidation of holdings in the research area. Based on findings of the study, the standard of living was observed as substandard. Literacy

level in general and particularly for women should be focused on. Role to be played by the Govt. is recommended to improve housing condition.

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