

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VERSUS TRADITIONAL NORMS AND RELIGIOUS VALUES: THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PARTICIPATORY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies key power brokers in Afghan society, including traditional and religious leaders, and explores the impact these actors have on the development process in Afghanistan. It examines how these leaders influence the development of interventions confronted by a background of unemployment, insurgency, injustice, corruption, poppy cultivation, and human rights abuses. Interviews were conducted with a range of Afghan people who were directly or indirectly impacted by the development processes including, public beneficiaries, and traditional and religious leaders.

The study provides an analysis of the interviewees arguments and statements about the development process, and proposes an effective alternative approach to participatory and sustainable development in the country. The study does not aim to examine the specific policies or strategies applied by the multitude of development agencies in Afghanistan, but rather, it focuses on grounded realities by understanding the common perceptions of beneficiaries of the development process

This study argues that the role of traditional and religious leaders as mechanisms to promote Afghan owned and Afghan led development should be utilized more in the whole cycles of the development process (from identification and planning to implementation and maintenance) in Afghanistan.

**KEY WORDS: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT/ TRADITIONAL NORMS/
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