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Semester: Autumn 2026

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ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

(Department of Agricultural Sciences)

Course: Approaches of Rural Development (2514)

Level: MSc Forestry Extension

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 2

Total Marks: 100 • Pass Marks: 40 • All questions carry equal marks (20 each).

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE — For Study & Reference

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Question 1: Education, Skills and Training for Rural Human Resource Development (20 Marks)

Q.1 Discuss the role of education, skills, and training in the development of human resources in rural areas. (20)

Introduction

Human resources — the knowledge, skills, health and attitudes of people — are now recognised as the most decisive resource of any community, more important in the long run than land, capital or machinery, because it is people who put every other resource to use. This

insight, developed in human capital theory and confirmed by the experience of every country that has escaped mass poverty, applies with special force to rural areas. The typical village does not lack people; it often has labour in surplus. What it lacks is developed people: farmers who can use modern technology and market information, workers with saleable skills, women whose abilities are educated rather than confined, and local youth qualified for the non-farm jobs that the rural economy increasingly provides. Human resource development (HRD) is the deliberate process of building those capabilities, and its instruments are education, skills formation and training. This answer discusses the role of each in rural areas, the ways in which they interact, and the obstacles — low school quality, dropout, gender gaps and weak links to employment — that must be overcome if investment in people is to yield its full return.

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General Education: The Foundation of Human Resources

Formal general education — primary, secondary and beyond — is the foundation on which all later skill formation rests. Its contribution to rural human resources operates through several channels. Literacy and numeracy are enabling capabilities: the farmer who can read can follow written extension advice, verify weights and prices, maintain accounts, use a mobile phone and banking services fully, and protect himself in dealings with officials and traders. Schooling changes attitudes as well as abilities, widening horizons, weakening fatalism, and making people receptive to innovation and to planning ahead — the psychological modernisation without which new techniques are viewed with suspicion. Education is also the main channel of occupational mobility: secondary and higher education qualify rural youth for teaching, health, technical, clerical, police, military and professional employment, and the remittances and example of such employed sons and daughters transform their families and villages. For girls,

the returns are compounded across generations, because an educated mother raises healthier children, sends them — including daughters — to school, and participates more fully in household decisions. Investment in rural schooling is thus not social consumption but the highest-yielding long-term investment available, provided that schools actually function: buildings exist in many villages, but learning depends on teacher presence, competence and materials, which is why quality, and not enrolment alone, is the true measure of this foundation.

Skills: Converting Education into Livelihoods

Skills are the specific, practical abilities by which people earn a living, and their development addresses the central defect of much rural education — that it prepares students for examinations rather than for work. Rural skill needs span both farm and non-farm sectors. On the farm they include machinery operation and repair, tube-well and solar-system maintenance, livestock management and artificial insemination assistance, horticulture and seed production, food processing and value addition, and the business skills of grading, packaging and marketing. Off the farm, the growing rural economy demands masons, electricians, plumbers, welders, tailors and garment workers, beauticians, drivers, computer and mobile-repair technicians, health and teaching assistants, and workers for the construction, transport and services sectors that expand as villages connect to towns. Technical and vocational institutes, polytechnics, apprenticeship with master craftsmen, and short courses by rural support programmes and NGOs are the delivery channels; women's skill training — tailoring, embroidery, poultry, dairy processing, beautician work and increasingly digital skills — deserves emphasis because it converts the largest underused rural human resource into

earners, with well-documented effects on household welfare and children's schooling. Skill formation raises human resources in their most marketable form: unlike a certificate alone, a demonstrated skill commands income immediately, locally or through migration, and gives its holder bargaining power and self-confidence that purely academic attainment often does not.

Training: Upgrading Those Already at Work

Training differs from education and initial skill formation in that it upgrades people who are already working — farmers, extension staff, community activists, local councillors, health workers and organisation managers. Its role in rural HRD is continuous modernisation. Farmer training — through extension demonstrations, farmer field schools, field days, study tours and now digital advisory services — keeps the largest rural occupation abreast of new varieties, pest threats, water-saving methods and market requirements; without it, yesterday's good farmer becomes today's backward one as conditions change. Training of community organisation members in bookkeeping, meeting procedure, conflict resolution and project management determines whether village organisations survive and command loans and grants, or collapse at the first dispute. Training of frontline staff — lady health workers, teachers through in-service courses, livestock assistants, and local government functionaries — raises the quality of every public service the village receives. Well-designed rural training shares recognisable features: it is practical and demonstrative rather than lectured, timed to the agricultural season and to learners' working hours, conducted near people's homes and in their own language, and followed up in the field. Training that ignores these rules — classroom courses in distant cities, in the wrong season, for nominees chosen by influence — wastes resources and discredits the very idea.

Interaction of Education, Skills and Training — and Obstacles

The three instruments form a system. General education supplies the literate, confident base from which skills are quickly learned; skills convert that base into earnings that motivate families to keep children in school; and training renews both throughout working life as technology and markets evolve. A village strong in all three possesses a self-reinforcing human resource: its farmers innovate, its youth find or create work, its organisations are competently run, and its out-migrants send back money and knowledge rather than merely escaping. The obstacles confronting this system in rural Pakistan are, however, formidable and must be faced frankly: high dropout, especially of girls at puberty for reasons of distance, custom and early marriage; child labour that competes with schooling in poor households; shortage and absenteeism of teachers and trainers; curricula poorly matched to rural livelihoods; vocational institutes concentrated in towns with weak rural outreach; and social attitudes that undervalue both girls' education and manual trades. Each obstacle has a practical counter — girls' stipends and nearby secondary schooling, school management committees, local recruitment of teachers, market-linked vocational courses, recognition of prior learning for experienced craftsmen, and community campaigns led by respected figures — and rural development programmes increasingly combine them, because no single intervention unlocks human potential on its own.

Table 1: Education, skills and training compared as HRD instruments

Instrument	Main Purpose	Typical Rural Forms	Chief Beneficiaries
General education	Literacy, knowledge,	Primary/secondary	Children, youth, adult

	attitudes, mobility	schools, adult literacy	learners
Skills formation	Saleable practical abilities for work	Vocational institutes, apprenticeships, short courses	Youth, women, landless workers
Training (in-service)	Upgrading performance in current roles	Farmer field schools, staff and activist training	Farmers, workers, community leaders
Higher/technical education	Professional and technical manpower	Colleges, universities, polytechnics	Rural students entering services and professions

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Conclusion

Education, skills and training are the three instruments by which raw rural manpower is developed into productive human resources. Education lays the foundation of literacy, awareness and mobility; skills give that foundation immediate earning power on and off the farm, not least for women and the landless; and training keeps farmers, workers and community institutions abreast of continuous change. Their combined effect is the transformation on which all other rural development depends, because developed people adopt technology, run organisations, demand quality services and create their own opportunities. The policy conclusion follows directly: rural HRD deserves investment priority equal to physical infrastructure, with attention to quality, girls' participation, market relevance

and lifelong upgrading. A countryside may receive roads and credit for a season, but a countryside that develops its people possesses an asset that appreciates for generations.

Question 2: Role of Local Leaders in Community Development (20 Marks)

Q.2 Discuss the role of local leaders in promoting community development activities in rural areas. (20)

Introduction

No rural community is an undifferentiated mass. Every village has its leaders — the people whose opinions carry weight, whose example is followed, and whose consent is practically necessary before anything collective can be done. They include formal leaders such as elected councillors, Union Council chairmen and members of school and village committees; traditional leaders such as landlords, elders, tribal or biradari heads and numberdars; religious leaders such as the imam and respected pirs; functional leaders such as teachers, health workers, retired servicemen and progressive farmers; and the emerging leaders of community organisations, women's groups and youth associations. Community development, which works by mobilising a whole community for self-improvement, must therefore work through leadership: it is the transmission belt between outside agencies and the village, and between an idea and its adoption. This answer discusses the roles local leaders play in promoting community development activities — initiating and legitimising change, mobilising people and resources, linking the community to outside support, managing collective work and conflict,

and sustaining institutions — and it examines the corresponding risks of elite capture and exclusion that make the broadening of leadership a development task in itself.

Initiating, Legitimising and Demonstrating Change

The first role of local leaders is to make new activities acceptable. In a tradition-respecting community, an unfamiliar proposal — a girls' school, a sanitation scheme, a new crop variety, a women's savings group — is judged initially by who supports it. Endorsement by trusted elders, the imam or a respected teacher converts suspicion into willingness to try, while their opposition can kill a sound programme before it starts; the wise development worker therefore consults leaders first, not as a courtesy but as a strategy. Leaders also initiate: the progressive farmer who first plants a new variety on his own land, the councillor who proposes a street-paving scheme, the woman activist who gathers her neighbours into a savings group are performing the innovator's role that diffusion research shows to be decisive, because ordinary people adopt what they have seen succeed with someone like themselves. Demonstration by leaders has evidential force that no pamphlet possesses. In addition, leaders articulate community needs — they voice, in council meetings, agency consultations and applications, the demands for water, roads or teachers that an unorganised village cannot effectively press — and they set priorities among competing needs, giving development activity a locally legitimate agenda rather than an externally imposed list.

Mobilising People and Resources, and Linking to Outside Support

Community development runs on contributions — labour, cash, land for a school or a road alignment, and attendance and effort over months — and mobilising these is pre-eminently the

leaders' role. A leader's call carries obligation: households contribute labour to desilt a watercourse or build a dispensary because respected figures have committed themselves and expect reciprocity; shirkat and collective work traditions are activated through leadership, not through circulars. Leaders likewise organise the community's formal face — forming village organisations and committees, maintaining membership and accounts, and enforcing the small disciplines of saving, repayment and maintenance on which collective assets depend. The linking role is equally important. Agencies, banks, NGOs and government departments cannot deal separately with hundreds of households; they deal with leaders and committees who present the community's case, receive and account for grants and loans, arrange counterpart contributions and report back. A competent, honest local leadership thus multiplies the resources a village can attract, while its absence leaves even willing agencies without a partner. Retired servicemen, teachers and organisation managers who can write applications, keep records and negotiate with officials perform a particularly valuable bridging function between the village's oral world and the state's written one.

Managing Work, Resolving Conflict and Sustaining Institutions

Development activities generate practical problems and disputes: where the hand-pump is sited, whose land the drain crosses, how water turns are shared, who is hired, whose contribution is outstanding. Local leaders perform the management and adjudication roles that keep such frictions from destroying collective work — allocating tasks, supervising quality, settling quarrels through panchayat-style mediation, and applying social sanctions to free-riders and defaulters. This dispute-resolution function protects the poor as well as the project when it is exercised fairly, because the alternative — every disagreement escalating to police or courts

— is ruinously expensive for ordinary villagers. Leaders also sustain institutions beyond the project period: it is local committee members who collect maintenance funds for the water scheme, ensure the school council meets, audit the organisation's books and hand over charge to successors. Development history is littered with works that functioned while outside staff remained and decayed within a year of their departure; the difference, in village after village, was whether genuine local leadership had been built into the structure or bypassed by it. Sustainability, in short, is leadership by another name.

Risks: Elite Capture, Exclusion and the Need to Broaden Leadership

A balanced discussion must confront the dark side of local leadership. The same influence that mobilises a community can capture its benefits: dominant landowning families have steered subsidised credit, inputs, works contracts and committee seats to themselves and their clients in programme after programme, converting development resources into patronage and deepening the dependence of the poor. Traditional leadership structures commonly exclude women entirely and marginalise tenants, landless labourers, minority groups and youth, so that 'community' decisions reflect only part of the community. Factional rivalry between leaders can split a village so completely that no collective activity survives. These are not arguments against working with leaders — there is no alternative route to collective action — but they define how it must be done. Sound community development identifies and cultivates multiple categories of leaders, including functional, women's and youth leadership; insists on open membership organisations with elected, rotating office-bearers and transparent accounts; sets aside representation for women and marginalised groups in committees; and uses social audits and public display of funds to discipline capture. The rural support programmes' practice of forming

broad-based village and women's organisations alongside, and gradually counterbalancing, traditional structures is the most developed Pakistani example of this broadening strategy in action.

Table 1: Roles of local leaders in community development

Role	What Leaders Do	Value to Development
Initiator / legitimiser	Propose activities, endorse new ideas; voice needs	Change becomes acceptable and locally owned
Demonstrator	Adopt new practices first on own land/home	Visible proof that persuades cautious followers
Mobiliser	Call for labour, cash, land and participation	Community contributions make works possible
Link / representative	Deal with agencies, banks and officials	Outside resources and services reach the village
Manager / adjudicator	Supervise works; mediate disputes; enforce rules	Projects completed; conflicts contained cheaply
Sustainer	Maintain assets, accounts and organisations	Benefits continue after outside support ends

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Conclusion

Local leaders promote community development by initiating and legitimising change, demonstrating new practices, mobilising the people's own labour and resources, linking the community to government and non-government support, managing collective work and resolving its conflicts, and sustaining the institutions that outlast any project. Because development in a village is collective action, and collective action requires leadership, these roles are indispensable; no agency can substitute for them. The qualification is that leadership must be broad, accountable and inclusive: where a narrow elite monopolises it, development resources are captured and the majority are excluded, whereas where functional, women's and youth leaders emerge alongside traditional figures, under transparent organisational rules, leadership becomes the community's own engine of development. The practical task for community development workers is therefore twofold — to work respectfully through existing leaders, and steadily to widen and discipline leadership so that it serves the whole community.

Question 3: Educational and Self-Help Methods of Community Development Compared (20 Marks)

Q.3 Compare the educational and self-help methods of community development with examples. (20)

Introduction

Community development workers have always faced a practical choice: how does an outsider help a community to change? Two broad methods dominate the classic literature and the

practice of programmes such as Village-AID, extension services and the rural support programmes, and they are usually taught as a pair. The educational method seeks to change people themselves — their knowledge, attitudes and skills — through teaching, demonstration and persuasion, trusting that informed people will then improve their own conditions. The self-help method seeks to change conditions by organising people to undertake concrete projects with their own resources, supplemented by outside aid, trusting that people learn and grow by doing. In real programmes the two are combined, but they differ in starting point, in the role of the worker, in speed and in risks, and a clear comparison sharpens the judgement of anyone designing village-level work. This answer defines each method, illustrates it with examples from rural practice, compares them systematically in a table, and concludes with the case for their integrated use — education preparing and guiding self-help, and self-help giving education a living classroom.

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The Educational Method: Meaning and Examples

The educational method of community development consists of planned teaching and communication activities intended to bring about changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices, without the worker directly executing development works. Its assumption is that much rural backwardness rests on ignorance — of germs and nutrition, of fertiliser and pest control, of rights and entitlements — and that removing ignorance releases people's own energy. Its instruments are the whole apparatus of extension and adult education: method and result demonstrations on farmers' fields, farmer field schools, lectures and group discussions, study tours to successful farms and villages, exhibitions and melas, posters, radio, television and now mobile-phone advisory services, literacy classes, and the training of local volunteers.

Examples make the method concrete. A result demonstration in which a progressive farmer's fertilised wheat plot visibly out-yields the neighbouring traditional plot teaches more persuasively than any lecture. Lady health workers educating mothers about oral rehydration, immunisation and breastfeeding have saved more children's lives through changed household behaviour than any building programme. Farmer field schools, in which growers discover integrated pest management through season-long observation of their own fields, show the method at its most sophisticated: the worker teaches a way of learning, not merely a set of instructions, and graduates become teachers of their neighbours in turn.

The Self-Help Method: Meaning and Examples

The self-help method consists of organising the community to identify its own felt needs, plan a response, and carry it out primarily with its own resources — labour, materials, cash and management — with the outside agency contributing only what the community genuinely cannot supply, such as technical design, cement, pipes or a matching grant. Its governing maxims are that people value what they have built, that contribution creates ownership and therefore maintenance, and that the capacity developed in doing one project together is itself the deepest development outcome. Examples abound in Pakistani practice. Under Village-AID and later programmes, villages built link roads, school rooms, wells and drainage channels through contributed labour (sometimes called shirkat or, in the northern areas, hashar), with government supplying only materials or skilled supervision. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme formalised the method: a village organisation first saves regularly, then receives a grant for a productive physical infrastructure project — an irrigation channel, a link road, a micro-hydel unit — which the community itself designs, builds and maintains, transforming

both the asset base and the organisation's competence. Women's savings groups that pool small deposits and lend among themselves for livestock and enterprise are self-help in financial form, as are water-user associations that take over the operation of their own watercourse. In each case the visible work is almost secondary to the invisible one: a community discovering that it can act.

Systematic Comparison

The two methods differ along several dimensions. In starting point, the educational method begins with the mind — knowledge and attitude — while self-help begins with action on a felt need. In the worker's role, the educator is a teacher and communicator, whereas the self-help organiser is a catalyst, facilitator and technical adviser who must deliberately refrain from doing the work himself. In resource flow, education is comparatively cheap and can reach many people thinly, while self-help mobilises large local resources but concentrates effort in participating communities. In speed and visibility, self-help produces tangible results quickly, which builds confidence and political support, while educational change is slower and harder to photograph, though often deeper and wider once it spreads. In risk, education's characteristic failure is sterility — knowledge that never converts into action because credit, inputs or organisation are missing; self-help's characteristic failure is misuse of the form — 'self-help' degenerating into unpaid forced labour for works chosen by officials or elites, or projects collapsed by disputes the community was never educated to manage. In sustainability, properly internalised education endures in behaviour for a lifetime and passes between generations, while self-help assets endure only where the organising and maintenance capacity — itself an educational product — has been built. The comparison may be summarised as follows.

Table 1: Educational and self-help methods compared

Aspect	Educational Method	Self-Help Method
Starting point	Knowledge, attitudes, skills of people	A felt need and a concrete project
Worker's role	Teacher, demonstrator, communicator	Organiser, catalyst, technical adviser
Main instruments	Demonstrations, field schools, media, literacy	Community organisation, contributed labour/cash, matching grants
Resource pattern	Low cost per person; wide, thin coverage	Mobilises large local resources; intensive coverage
Speed of visible result	Slow; behavioural change takes time	Fast; tangible works appear quickly
Typical failure	Knowledge without action (missing inputs/credit)	Capture, forced labour, unmaintained works
Sustainability	High — learning persists and spreads	High only if organisation and maintenance capacity built
Examples	Farmer field schools; health education; result demonstrations	Village-built roads and channels; savings groups; water-user associations

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The Case for Combining the Two Methods

Presented as rivals, the methods are in practice complements, and every durable programme combines them in sequence and in parallel. Education must precede and accompany self-help: a community needs to understand germ theory before its sanitation project makes sense, bookkeeping before its savings can be trusted, and its rights and options before it can choose projects wisely rather than accept an official's list. Self-help, in return, gives education its motivation and its proof: farmers attend pest-management training eagerly when their own collectively managed crop is at stake, and mothers absorb health teaching when their own organisation runs the weighing and immunisation sessions. The classical community development formula — felt needs, self-help, and education through doing — already contains the synthesis: begin from a need the people feel, meet it mainly by their own effort with limited outside aid, and treat every project as a school in which technical knowledge, organisational skill and democratic habits are learned. Programmes that used education alone, such as purely advisory extension without credit or organisation, repeatedly stalled at the point of action; programmes that used self-help alone repeatedly produced works without understanding, which decayed. The comparison thus ends not in a verdict for one method but in a design principle: teach in order to enable action, and organise action in order to deepen learning.

Conclusion

The educational method develops people through knowledge, attitude and skill change, using demonstrations, field schools, media and literacy, and its strengths are depth, low unit cost and

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permanence, against the risk that knowledge without means remains unused. The self-help method develops communities through organised action on felt needs with their own resources, using village organisations, contributed labour and savings and matching support, and its strengths are tangible results, ownership and mobilised resources, against the risks of capture and decay where understanding and organisation are weak. Compared point by point, they are opposite halves of one process. Effective community development therefore integrates them: education to prepare, guide and consolidate, self-help to embody, test and own — so that the village gains both the works it builds and the capability, far more valuable, of building the next ones itself.

Question 4: Challenges in Implementing National Community Development Programmes (20 Marks)

Q.4 Explain the major challenges faced in implementing the national community development programs. (20)

Introduction

Pakistan's national community development programmes — from Village-AID in the 1950s through the integrated and rural support efforts of later decades — shared a noble design: to raise the whole life of the village by mobilising its people with government support. Their implementation, however, repeatedly fell short of their blueprints, and the shortfall was not accidental. The same obstacles recur across programmes and decades with such regularity that they must be regarded as structural challenges of implementing community development at

national scale in a poor, unequal and administratively centralised society. This answer explains the major challenges under connected heads: financial and administrative weaknesses, shortages of trained and motivated field staff, the socio-political structure of the village itself — inequality, factionalism and elite capture — weak genuine participation, problems of coordination and continuity, and the cultural and educational barriers of illiteracy and resistance to change. It concludes that these challenges are formidable but not insuperable, since later approaches, notably social mobilisation through autonomous rural support programmes, were designed precisely by learning from them.

Financial, Administrative and Staffing Challenges

The first group of challenges is material and administrative. Community development is labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive, but national coverage still requires funds for staff, transport, materials and grants that budgets chronically underprovided; Village-AID, for example, promised each village worker a small development fund that arrived late, in part, or not at all, destroying credibility with villagers who had contributed their labour in expectation of matching support. Administrative procedures designed for control rather than facilitation — lengthy approvals, rigid heads of expenditure, audit fear — delayed works past the agricultural season in which alone they could be executed. Above all, the programmes suffered from their human instrument. The multipurpose village-level worker was expected to be competent in agriculture, health, education, cooperatives and construction simultaneously, an impossible brief, and was typically young, briefly trained, poorly paid, burdened with reporting and targets, and supervised by officers who themselves rotated frequently. Posting to rural areas was treated as punishment, accommodation and transport were lacking, and political interference

in transfers destroyed continuity of the personal relationships on which community work depends. A programme is only as good as its last-mile worker, and at national scale Pakistan never financed, trained or protected that worker adequately.

Village Structure: Inequality, Factionalism and Elite Capture

The second group of challenges arises from the social structure into which programmes were inserted. The textbooks assumed a harmonious 'community' with common interests; the real village is stratified by land ownership, caste and biradari, and divided by factions competing for honour and resources. National programmes that distributed valuable benefits — subsidised inputs, credit, works contracts, committee positions — predictably saw those benefits cornered by dominant landowners and their clients, who alone had the literacy, connections and leisure to deal with officials. Participation by small farmers, tenants, artisans and the landless remained nominal, and women were excluded almost entirely from the formal structures of early programmes, halving the community whose development was proclaimed. Factionalism compounded capture: a work sited in one faction's territory was sabotaged by the other, organisations split along kinship lines, and programme staff were manoeuvred into partisan roles. Officials, needing quick visible results and local allies, allied with the very elites whose dominance the programme was supposed to soften. This is the single most documented implementation challenge in the literature, and it explains the paradox of programmes that spent fully, built measurably, and yet left the poor majority feeling untouched or even more dependent.

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Weak Participation, Coordination and Continuity

Three further challenges concern the programme process itself. First, participation was more slogan than practice: targets, schemes and timetables descended from provincial and federal headquarters, and villagers were 'mobilised' to contribute labour to predetermined projects rather than consulted on their own priorities — a top-down method flatly contradicting community development philosophy, which produced compliance without ownership and works that nobody maintained. Relatedly, contribution demands sometimes fell hardest on the poorest, whose labour was their only asset, converting self-help into a regressive tax. Second, coordination failed: community development required agriculture, health, education, cooperatives and works departments to act together in the village, but each guarded its budget, hierarchy and credit, departmental targets conflicted, and no field-level authority existed to compel joint planning; integrated programmes collapsed back into departmental fragments. Third, continuity was destroyed by politics: each regime rebranded, restructured or abolished its predecessor's programme — Village-AID wound up in 1961, Basic Democracies dismantled after 1971, later programmes renamed and redirected — so that institutions, staff experience and community trust were repeatedly liquidated just as they matured. Donor dependence added a further discontinuity, as foreign-funded components ended with their projects. A method whose essence is slow trust-building was thus administered through the most unstable of instruments.

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Cultural, Educational and Geographic Barriers

Finally, implementation confronted the conditions of the rural population itself. Mass illiteracy limited the use of written instructions, records and applications, and made communities dependent on literate intermediaries who could exploit that dependence. Deeply rooted customs and a rational caution born of poverty made people slow to risk innovations whose failure could mean hunger; what officials recorded as 'resistance to change' or 'fatalism' was often the poor household's sensible refusal to gamble its subsistence on an outsider's assurance — a challenge of trust that only demonstration, time and honest dealing could overcome, and which target-driven programmes had no time to give. Purdah and related norms restricted women's contact with male staff, while programmes employed almost no female field workers to reach them. Geography multiplied every difficulty: scattered hamlets in mountains, deserts and riverine tracts raised the cost and lowered the frequency of staff contact, so implementation was thinnest exactly where poverty was deepest. Communication failures completed the circle — messages in official language, through media villagers did not use, about schemes whose rules changed without explanation. None of these barriers was the villagers' fault; together they define the environment in which implementation had to be designed, and programmes that ignored them failed in predictable ways.

Table 1: Major implementation challenges and their consequences

Challenge	Form It Takes	Consequence
Inadequate, delayed finance	Small budgets; late releases; rigid procedures	Works stall; credibility with villagers lost

Weak field staff	Overloaded, undertrained, frequently transferred workers	Poor advice; broken relationships; target-chasing
Elite capture	Dominant families corner benefits and committees	Poor excluded; inequality deepens; resentment
Factionalism	Biradari and party splits divide the village	Works sabotaged; organisations split
Top-down planning	Targets imposed; labour demanded, views ignored	Compliance without ownership; no maintenance
Poor coordination	Departments act separately in the same village	Duplication, gaps and contradictory advice
Discontinuity	Each regime abolishes or rebrands programmes	Institutions and trust repeatedly destroyed
Illiteracy and exclusion	Written procedures; women unreachable by male staff	Dependence on intermediaries; half the community missed

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Conclusion

The major challenges in implementing national community development programmes were structural, not incidental: underfinanced and procedurally rigid administration; an impossible

burden placed on undertrained, unprotected field staff; a stratified and factionalised village society that channelled benefits to elites and excluded the poor and women; participation reduced to labour extraction under top-down targets; departments that would not coordinate; regimes that would not continue each other's work; and the real barriers of illiteracy, justified caution and difficult geography. Recognising these challenges is not a counsel of despair but the foundation of better design. The rural support programmes that followed were built as point-by-point answers — autonomous institutions insulated from political turnover, organisation of the poor and of women as the first step, professional social organisers instead of multipurpose target-chasers, and patient, decade-long engagement. Implementation, the record teaches, is not the tail end of a programme; it is the programme.

Question 5: The Basic Democracies System — Role and Impact on Local Government and Rural Development (20 Marks)

Q.5 Analyze the role and impact of the Basic Democracies System on local government and rural development in Pakistan. (20)

Introduction

The Basic Democracies System, introduced by President Ayub Khan through the Basic Democracies Order of 1959, was the most ambitious experiment in local government in Pakistan's early history and the framework within which rural development was organised for a decade. It created a hierarchy of elected councils from the village to the division, gave them development functions and funds, and later used the lowest tier as the electoral college for the

President and the national and provincial assemblies. Its assessment remains contested: it undeniably built local institutions, trained tens of thousands of rural representatives and executed a large volume of development works, yet it was also designed and used as an instrument of control by a military-bureaucratic regime, and its democratic credentials were compromised from birth. This answer analyses the system's role and impact under connected heads — its structure, its contribution to local government as an institution, its rural development role and achievements, its political functions and defects, and its long-term legacy — reaching a balanced verdict that distinguishes what it built from what it corrupted.

Structure of the System

The system comprised five tiers. At the base stood the Union Council in rural areas (with town and union committees in towns and cities), covering roughly ten to fifteen thousand people, whose members — Basic Democrats — were directly elected by adult franchise. Above it were the Tehsil (or Thana) Council, the District Council, the Divisional Council and, at the apex, the Provincial Development Advisory Council. The upper tiers mixed elected representatives from below with nominated members and officials, and were chaired by the corresponding civil servants — the Deputy Commissioner presiding over the District Council, the Commissioner over the Divisional Council — a feature that embedded official control within representative forms. Union Councils received functions in agriculture, sanitation, water supply, education, roads and social welfare, powers to levy certain local taxes and fees, and development funds, notably through the Rural Works Programme from 1963, which required works to be planned and executed through the councils. In 1962 the Basic Democrats, some eighty thousand in number, became the electoral college that elected the President and the assemblies,

transforming local councillors into the regime's political foundation. Elections were held in 1959–60 and again in 1964–65, giving the system a decade of continuous operation before it was dismantled after Ayub Khan's fall in 1969 and formally abolished by the succeeding government.

Role and Impact on Local Government

As an institution of local government, Basic Democracies achieved things no predecessor had. It gave Pakistan, for the first time, a uniform nationwide network of elected local bodies reaching every village, with defined functions, budgets and staff support, replacing the patchwork of nominated district boards and dormant panchayats. It trained a political generation: approximately eighty thousand Basic Democrats, and many more who contested and campaigned, learned meeting procedure, budgeting, record-keeping and the representation of constituents' demands — a school of local politics whose graduates populated Pakistani public life for decades. It brought administration closer to the citizen: the Union Council office, the chairman and the secretary became the accessible face of the state for certificates, dispute mediation and development applications, and councils performed useful judicial and conciliation functions through conciliation committees. Against this must be set structural defects. Official chairmanship of the higher tiers and the bureaucracy's control over funds, approvals and the suspension of councils subordinated representatives to administrators; local taxation powers were little used, leaving councils dependent on government grants and therefore on government favour; and the system's use as an electoral college corrupted its local purpose, since a Basic Democrat's value to the regime lay in delivering his vote upward, not

services downward. Local government under Basic Democracies was thus real but tutelary — devolution within limits set, and revocable, by the centre.

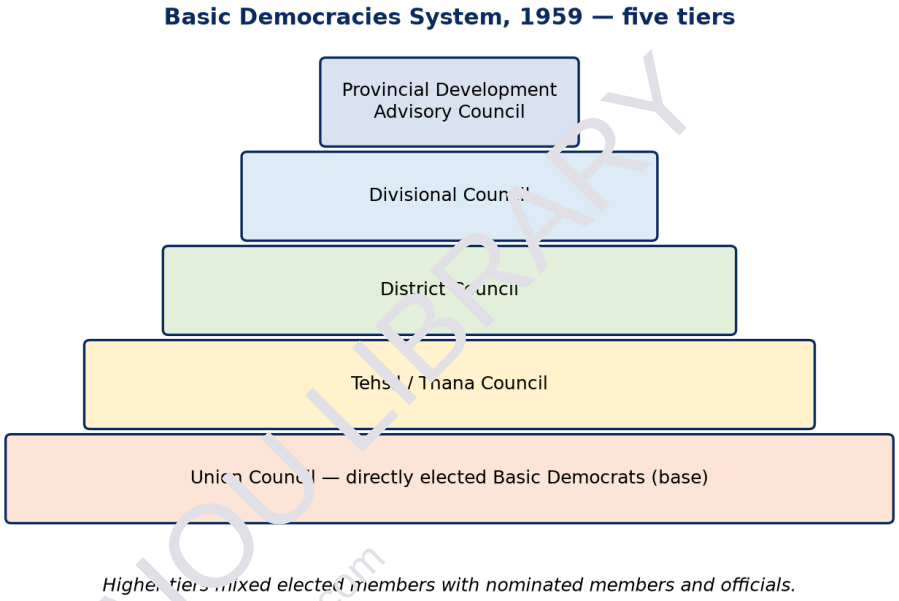

Figure 1: The five tiers of the Basic Democracies System (1959). The Union Council was the directly elected base; higher tiers mixed representatives with officials.

Role and Impact on Rural Development

In rural development, the system's principal contribution was to provide an institutional channel through which development funds could reach the village and be locally allocated. The Rural Works Programme (1963 onwards) is the clearest case: substantial funds were placed at the disposal of Union and District Councils to execute labour-intensive works — link roads, culverts, drainage, soil conservation, school buildings, water supply — chosen by the councils themselves. Evaluations recorded a large physical output and a genuine, if uneven, responsiveness to local priorities, together with employment for rural labour in slack seasons.

Councils also supported agricultural extension campaigns, cooperative formation, family planning and primary education drives, giving national programmes a local partner where previously they had faced the village unmediated. The development impact was nevertheless limited by familiar weaknesses. Council leadership came overwhelmingly from the landowning elite, and works and contracts were distributed through patronage, favouring councillors' own villages, factions and clients; technical supervision was thin, so quality varied and some works were fictitious or short-lived; accounts and audit lagged behind spending; and the poorest — tenants, labourers and women, the last wholly absent from the councils — had no voice in allocation. The system therefore accelerated the physical development of the countryside while reproducing its social hierarchy: villages gained roads and schools, but the gains were mediated by, and reinforced, existing power.

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Political Analysis and Overall Verdict

Politically, Basic Democracies must be analysed as a dual-purpose creation. For the Ayub regime, it manufactured legitimacy and a controlled substitute for the party politics it had suppressed: a pyramid of representatives indebted to official patronage, electing the President indirectly and insulating him from mass franchise. Critics, including much of the democratic opposition of the 1960s, accordingly dismissed it as democracy without the demos — controlled, indirect and corruptible, since eighty thousand electors could be pressured and purchased in ways a mass electorate could not; the controversial presidential election of 1965, in which the electoral college returned Ayub Khan against Fatima Jinnah despite strong urban opposition voting, fixed this reputation. The system's defenders reply that it provided political education and administrative experience on an unprecedented scale, maintained a decade of

stable local administration, and that its abolition left a local-government vacuum Pakistan repeatedly struggled to refill — later local body systems of 1979, 2000 and after all reproduced its basic architecture of union councils and tiered bodies, usually without conceding more real autonomy. The balanced verdict is that Basic Democracies was simultaneously a genuine institutional advance and a democratic deficit: it proved that elected local government could function nationwide and carry development to the village, and it proved, with equal clarity, that local institutions designed as instruments of the centre will serve the centre first. Its development works were real, its political training was real, and so was its subordination and elite capture.

Table 1: Basic Democracies — achievements and limitations

Aspect	Achievements	Limitations
Local government	Nationwide elected councils; trained ~80,000 representatives; administration brought to village level	Official chairmanship and control; dependence on grants; councils suspendable by government
Rural development	Rural Works Programme; locally chosen roads, schools, water and drainage works; local partner for national programmes	Elite and patronage allocation; uneven quality and audit; poor and women voiceless

Politics	Political education; stable local administration for a decade; model for later local-body systems	Electoral college for controlled indirect elections; instrument of regime legitimacy; corruption of local purpose

Conclusion

The Basic Democracies System played a foundational role in Pakistan's local government and rural development: it created the country's first nationwide structure of elected local councils, channelled development funds — above all through the Rural Works Programme — into locally selected village works, and trained a generation of rural representatives. Its impact was correspondingly double-edged. Institutionally and physically it advanced the countryside; democratically it remained a controlled, official-dominated structure whose members' role as an electoral college subordinated local service to regime survival, and socially its benefits flowed through, and strengthened, the rural elite. Analysed whole, the system stands as the essential case study of this course's recurring theme: local institutions are indispensable to rural development, but their developmental value depends on genuine autonomy, broad representation and accountability — qualities Basic Democracies possessed only in part, which is why its works endured longer than its reputation.

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