

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF NATIVE PEOPLE REGARDING
DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS OF CHINA PAKISTAN
ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) IN GWADAR,
BALOCHISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

Gwadar's economic potential has become a center of debate in national and international media. However, less discussed are the people living there, especially the native communities who are mostly dependent on fishing as a source of livelihood. Moreover, most of the available studies have taken a quantitative approach, obscuring the genuine voices of the local people. This study takes a people-centric approach by employing qualitative method with grounded theory as a research design. The study has primarily explored the perspectives of native dwellers of Gwadar regarding the positive and negative impacts of CPEC projects. Intensive fieldwork has been carried out in Gwadar city to collect data from various groups including fishermen community, people displaced/ re-located by the CPEC projects, daily wage laborers, local community leaders/influential, the micro-business community, government officials, and students. Both male and female members of these communities have been interviewed for a better understanding of how different groups are affected differently by executed projects. The findings reveal that the local people had a lot of expectations from the CPEC projects, but overtime these expectations have changed into concerns and frustrations. Most people acknowledged and appreciated the development of infrastructure in Gwadar as several mega projects have been executed in the city as part of CPEC. However, the locals have been feeling discriminated against as they are facing water scarcity, long hours of electricity load shedding, few employment opportunities, etc. They also fear that they should be relocated by the government from the land of their forefathers and the city. The local people, especially the fishing communities have been feeling restrictions on their movement and access to the sea which has affected their fishing business. This research has also attempted to arrive at a theory to interpret, predict and manage the attitude of the local people towards mega development projects. Policy recommendations have been provided at the end of this report to make CPEC more meaningful for the local people of Gwadar and to (re)gain their trust and confidence in the government, which is currently at stake.

PREFACE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
COPHC	China Overseas Port Holding Company
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GDA	Gwadar Development Authority
GPA	Gwadar Port Authority
OBOR	One Belt One Road
DIDR	Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement (DIDR)
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises

INTRODUCTION

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered to be a 'game-changer' (Qazilbash, 2017; Khan et al., 2020; Hamza & Gillani, 2020) for its economic and geo-strategic importance for Pakistan and the region. As the flagship project of the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) of China, CPEC is expected to bring development, growth, and prosperity directly not only to Pakistan and China, but will have positive impacts on Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian Republic, and the region. (CPEC Authority, 2021). As such, there has been a great deal of discussion about CPEC, and its many advantages have been highlighted by experts.

However, while CPEC will certainly bring infrastructure developments, economic opportunities, progression, and prosperity in the region, nevertheless, megaprojects usually create inconveniences for local people in the short and well as long run. Local people usually show a mix of reactions to new developments (Kanwal et al. 2018). While some people see it as an opportunity to be welcomed, some local people of the same area might see a developmental project as a threat to their indigenous livelihood structure, culture, and identity. The recent agitations by local people in Gwadar (Dawn, Dec 01, 2021) are examples of how certain mega projects can espouse unrest among people. To ensure the smooth execution of CPEC projects, it is imperative for policymakers both in Islamabad and Beijing to take into consideration the important point that effectively managing the expectations and the concerns of the local people are important factors behind the success of a megaproject.

The enormous benefits of CPEC to the national economy of Pakistan have been highlighted in the media and as well academic literature in Pakistan. However, not much is available on how CPEC projects will benefit the local population in Gwadar, which is considered to be the epicentre of CPEC (Abbas, 2019; Dawn, Dec. 01, 2021; Kanwal et al. 2018; Saad et al., 2019). It can also be noted that most academic literature and media have focused on the expected benefits of CPEC to Pakistan at the *national level*, ignoring the *cost* some people at the *local level* might have to pay for these benefits. What are the costs and benefits of CPEC to the local people at Gwadar? What are the fears and expectations of various groups within Gwadar regarding various development projects? How can policymakers better manage the concerns and expectations of the local people for maximizing the benefits of CPEC? How the local communities as important stakeholders can be made partners in the development projects so that the expectations of the local people are managed in a better way? These and other such questions are the focus of this study.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives.

1. To explore the knowledge, attitude, and perception of the native people regarding the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar;
2. To analyze the expectations and aspirations of local people regarding the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar;
3. To investigate the concerns and apprehensions of local people regarding the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar;

4. To understand how the different groups within the area are affected differently by the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar.

1.2 Research Questions

The following major research questions were set to guide this research.

1. How do the local people understand and react towards the various developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar?
2. What are the expectations and aspirations of local people regarding the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar?
3. What are the concerns and apprehensions of local people regarding the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar?
4. How the different groups of the local people within the area are affected differently by the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Infrastructural development projects, from the colonial period, have largely informed nation-states' thinking in various ways with respect to the construction of public expressways, railway tracks, and other large infrastructures in the context of post-colonial state formation. The experiences of colonialism continue to shape such thinking in the global South as they attempt to emulate the industrialized West and its material riches, actual framework, and other measures of prosperity (Jamali, 2014). However, indigenous populations inhabiting these spaces bear an inconsistent portion of the financial, social, and ecological costs of such developmental thinking. Specifically, large-scale projects change the current spaces and patterns of public social life in manners that nearby native people find problematic, confusing, and threatening (Ferguson, 1999).

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a multifaceted development project which includes infrastructure, economic development, industrial zones, and regional connectivity projects which are currently under construction throughout the country. The CPEC development projects will initiate in the city of Gwadar, Balochistan, and is considered to be a 'game-changer' in Pakistan (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015) as it will minimize poverty, solve energy crises, and creates business and employment opportunities for the local people.

Development projects are not free from negative issues for the inhabitants of the locality of development sites (Mensah, 2016). Jamali (2014) argues that development in the form of mega-development projects can lead to power arrangements concerning capital, political power, expertise, and knowledge to serve the specific interests of the nationalist and international actors. Congruently, Ufford and Giri (2003) believe that developmental projects bring both gains and pains in society and some people may get the gains while others may pay for the pains in the process of development projects. Furthermore, Mensah (2016) saw the development projects not only assist in the enlargement of foreign exchange profits and benefits to the people but also expose society to numerous risks and disruptions in social life. As articulated by Ufford & Giri (2003), "development projects tend to make some people get the gains while others get the pains". In recent times, several research studies have elaborated the advantage of CPEC from both the micro-level as well as the macro levels, but most studies have been theoretical in nature (Saad et al., 2019). Secondly, for most of the studies concerned with the impact of CPEC on "local" people, the term 'local' means "Pakistanis as a whole". For example, the studies conducted by Kanwal et al. (2018) and Saad et al. (2019) to study the effects of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor on the local people in Pakistan in which they have based their studies on national samples of people selected from all over the country. These kinds of studies are valuable, but they fall short of 'localizing the context' to the specific groups which are directly affected by various CPEC projects and who constitute the primary stakeholders. Thirdly, most previous studies have highlighted the positive impacts of CPEC on the overall economy of Pakistan, giving little attention to the plight of the people at the grassroots level who might feel alienated and excluded from the development process.

A few studies have already highlighted the plight of some local communities in Gwadar who feel that the authorities have failed to listen to their concern. For instance, Ali (2018), Afzal & Naseem (2018) and Esteban (2016) have found that while most of the local people will benefit from CPEC projects, some of the local communities in Balochistan have raised their reservations regarding CPEC projects. Similarly, the local people in Gwadar are concerned about the increasing securitization of the city in which the local fishermen are restricted from catching fish in the sea as far as twenty kilometres (Ali, 2018). Notezai (2021) has observed that local people are in a

state of anxiety about their future in the city and “if Gwadar’s development is not meant to benefit locals first, then it is the first step towards derailing of the entire development process”.

It is a decided fact that mega-development projects including dams, railways, seaports, airports, etc. provide significant opportunities for employment, business, and trade to bring prosperity and enhance the socio-economic position and living standards of the people (Abbas, 2019). However, such projects often require much land for construction and may have impacts and consequences on the locality such as disturbance, displacement, socio-economic problems, and even social and political unrest. Thus, people may be displaced and deprived of their pieces of land and lose their socio-cultural aspects of living styles, traditions, social structure, and other economic resources due to mega-development projects (Oliver-Smith, 2009). For example, the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in India not only affect thousands of people socio-economically but also displaced many people without economic compensation for their lost lands and other resources. The native people were neither consulted nor compensated in the process of construction of the dam. Thus, the economic vulnerabilities of local people increased because of the development of the dam (Flood, 1997). It is fairly common and natural that the local people expect to get socio-economic benefits from any development project (Obour et al., 2016). Suárez & Pérez (2018) argue that if the needs of communities are not ensured accordingly in development projects, then conflicts and social unrest intensify in the areas of the affected communities. If the development of infrastructure projects is in the interests of a government, then it may expropriate people of their lands forcefully and resettle the affected communities in other parts and areas. The study concluded that most of the affected people perceive infrastructure development negatively. Thus, Chang et al., (2018) stated that the involvement of the local community plays an integral role in sustainable development in the area of locality. Initiating any developmental projects, the perspectives of the local population are essentially required to build a mutual relationship to extend the work of development.

Displacement of local people by development projects has been the most discussed topic in different Asian countries in the process of economic evolution and urbanization because they are shifting from subsistence agriculture to the industrial economy. The number of affected people has been increasing predominantly in developing countries like Pakistan, India, Malaysia, and China, where rapid physical infrastructure development is considered as a solution to economic development and sustainability. Studying the consequences of displacement because of mega-development projects helps in the cost and benefits analysis of mega-development projects (Neef & Singer, 2015). Policymakers need to create positive and strong ties with affected people to reduce the socio-cultural and economic impacts on them and preserve the social and historical aspects of their culture. Development, displacement, settlement, and resettlement policies required significant legal compensation to the affected and marginalized people of mega-development projects (Abbas, 2019).

The successful implementation of any developmental project is depended upon the perception and cooperation of the local folks. Hence, it looks indispensable to comprehend the perspectives of the local people about the developmental projects in Gwadar. CPEC’s projects in Gwadar could help revive aging and dysfunctional infrastructure and its flagging economy. But to deliver on these promises, policymakers need to implement them with considerably more sensitivity and consultation than they have displayed thus far. The communities most affected in Gwadar must be given a greater voice in shaping various projects (Int’l Crises Group, 2018).

It should be noted that most of the studies about CPEC have taken a national/international perspective in which the local perspective is almost completely missing in academic circles. Only

journalists have written here and there about the dissident voices of local people in Balochistan regarding CPEC. Secondly, most academic studies on the topic are quantitative; only a few qualitative studies could be found on the topic in the quest to understand the local perspective in Gwadar. Given that local acceptance and ownership is a pre-request for the success of megaprojects and given that the local people in Balochistan in general and in Gwadar, in particular, have shown resentment towards the projects, this study is of utmost importance. Policymakers must recognize that the viability of CPEC projects rests on the ownership of stakeholders. The locals need to see dividends. Otherwise, their apprehensions will take them further away from owning the projects which will aggravate social and political divides, fueling tension, and potentially conflict. Instead of suppressing their questions, the fears and suspicions of local people need to be removed by engaging and involving them in development activities. While research on CPEC from the national, economic, and strategic perspectives is important, researching with the local people is even more significant for better understanding the issues and for successful implementation of the projects. This study, therefore, has been designed to explore and analyze the knowledge, understanding, fears, and expectations of local people in Gwadar. The study strives to better understand the viewpoint of the native people whose lives are going to be directly or indirectly affected significantly (both positively and negatively) by the CPEC projects.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Nature of the Study

The study was conducted using a qualitative inductive approach. Researchers reasonably chose qualitative research with 'the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 11). Qualitative research methodology aims to thoroughly explore a particular social phenomenon from a certain social context (Harper, 2011; Grbich, 1999). Unlike quantitative researchers who are interested in understanding "what", qualitative researchers are more interested in "how" (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research is typically unstructured and exploratory. In this study, the researchers were not interested in determining objective statistical conclusions or in testing a hypothesis, but rather in gaining insights about CPEC projects in Gwadar from the perspectives of the local population.

3.2 Research Design: Grounded Theory

The study was conducted by following the grounded theory approach which is one of the most suitable research designs for studies seeking to understand the reality from the participants' perspectives. Grounded Theory directs the researchers to connect with participants to discover their interpretation of what is occurring and what are "their understanding of the how, why, when and where of what they and others are doing or experiencing" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p.42). 'Grounded theory' was developed by Glaser & Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss, 1987). 'Grounded theory' is based on the symbolic interactionism perspective which provides a systematic framework to investigate social phenomena and explore social reality through interaction with involved individual participants to understand the situation (Morse & Field 1995; El Haddad, 2016). It assists to comprehend and explore the social phenomenon of investigation 'from the viewpoint of those involved and it allows whatever is theoretically relevant to emerge' (Andersen, Inoue & Walsh, 2013, p. 3). As a result, grounded theorists examine social processes in human social interaction (Hutchinson & Wilson, 1993) to find patterns and processes to comprehend how a group of people describe their reality (Stern & Porr, 2017).

3.3 The Universe of the Study

This study was conducted in the city of Gwadar city from the 1st of June 2021 to the 30th of September 2021. Situated in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, Gwadar is a fishing town on the Arabian Sea near the Iranian border. It is situated on the south-western coastline of Balochistan, Pakistan, and is considered an important port city of Pakistan. Gwadar's geo-economic location has become one of the prime motives behind the mega-developmental projects of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Geographically and geo-politically the deep seaport of Gwadar is of importance to the world because of its lying on the mouth of the Straits of Hormuz (Shahrukh et al., 2020). Gwadar is 120 Kilometers away from Turbat in the southwest and 170 Kilometers away from Chabahar port city of Sistan and Baluchistan Province of Iran (Ahmed, 2014).

Gwadar got the status of a district on the 1st of July 1977 (Sarfray, 1997). It is the largest coastal district of Balochistan with almost a total of 15,216 square kilometres of area and 650 kilometres of coastline. The total population of Gwadar district is around 263,514 with low population density, whereas the hosting city of port Gwadar has a population of 138,438 (Pakistan Bureau of

Statistics, 2017). Around seventy percent of Gwadar's population depends on fishing and other marine resources as a fundamental source of livelihood (Shahrukh et al., 2020). The Makran coastal highway connects Gwadar with Karachi, whereas Motorway Eight (M-8) connects the port city of Gwadar with the rest of Balochistan leading up to Ratodero, Sindh.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Qualitative analyses require a smaller sample size generally than quantitative analyses (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). However, there are several issues in deciding the sample size in qualitative methods because qualitative researchers usually recommend saturation as a leading principle in the process of sampling (Mason, 2010). Baker & Edwards (2012) state that there are not any fixed criteria for deciding a sample size in a qualitative study but 'it depends' (p.2) upon the aims and objectives, epistemological, methodological questions and practical positions and availability of time and resources while carrying out a qualitative research study. The founders of Grounded Theory Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested saturation as a suitable evaluating principle for the determination of sample size in a qualitative study under the domain of grounded theory.

This study kept saturation as the target during data collection and continued until no new data was coming forth from the fieldwork. Given that a heterogeneous sample was selected for data collection, it was expected that saturation may not be achieved before 50 interviews. While in the field, the research team continued to collect data and stopped after conducting 64 qualitative interviews. Among the 64 interviews, forty-nine were conducted with male, and fifteen interviews were conducted with female participants.

3.5 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the native people of Gwadar. By native people, we meant the local population of Gwadar, those whose forefathers have been living in the city. Recent migrants who settled in the city were excluded from the study. As stated earlier, people of heterogeneous socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are native to the city, all of whom were affected by the CPEC developmental projects in different ways. A large number of these people are dependent on fishing as a source of livelihood, but other occupational groups could also be found in the city. Data for this study were collected from different groups of the local population, including males as well as females. The inclusion of women folk was important because they constitute important stakeholders who were affected in a specific way that has been highlighted in the results and discussion section. Keeping in view the cultural sensitivity of purdah and seclusion of women in Baloch culture, a female research assistant was hired and trained for collecting data from female participants in Gwadar. Data for the study were collected from the following identified sub-groups.

1. Fishermen & Women
2. Displaced People
3. Micro Businesspersons
4. Political people/community leaders
5. Daily-wage labourers
6. Government official/authority
7. Students

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants of the study. Purposive sampling refers to the intentional selection of participants from the population who has particular pieces of knowledge of the phenomenon of interest and provide relevant information regarding the research study (Liamputtong, 2009; Polit & Beck 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Glaser, one of the founding fathers of grounded theory, also suggested a purposive sampling method in the selection of the participants (Glaser, 1978). Moreover, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) stated that a purposeful sampling technique helps the researcher to select participants with experiences and knowledge who can offer insight into the topic of interest critically to maintain the reliability of qualitative investigation.

The participants of the study were approached purposefully by keeping in mind that they provide particular pieces of knowledge of the phenomenon and relevant information of the study. The participants of the study were carefully selected by following research ethics relating to confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent.

3.6 Tool of Data Collection: Interview Guide

Interviewing has been traditionally associated with qualitative research which focuses on the exploration of values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and feelings characteristic of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007). Polit & Beck (2008) and Stern & Porr (2011) regarded in-depth interviewing as the most commonly used technique of data collection in the study of grounded theory. The researchers used an interview guide for collecting in-depth qualitative data. Moreover, the research team took field notes during the survey and interview process in the field.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of the research method, including the sampling procedure and the tool of data collection. After conducting the pilot study, the researcher used the lessons learned from the pilot study and reviewed, refined, and finalized the sampling procedure and the interview guide accordingly. An important purpose behind piloting the study was to see the feasibility of the fieldwork in the context of Covid-19. Covid-19 restricted the movement of people which jeopardized the fieldwork to some extent at the end of July and earlier of August 2021. In this case, the health and safety of research participants and the research team were the primary concern during this research. All possible measures were taken to minimize the risk during the fieldwork, including a strict adherence to the SOPs advised by the Government of Pakistan and the World Health Organization.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researchers were aware of the ethical and political sensitivities surrounding this research. They took all possible precautionary measures while researching without jeopardizing the interest of participants as well as other stakeholders of CPEC. The research team was thoroughly oriented to keep neutrality during the data collection and analysis. The participants of the study were briefed about the study and their consent was obtained regarding their participation in the study. The participants were also informed about the use of voice-recorder during the interviews and their consent was obtained for this purpose. In cases where the participants refused to give their consent for interviews or recoding, their choice was respected and was excused accordingly.

3.9 Data Analysis

The grounded theory methodology suggests a simultaneous process of data gathering and analysis through a constant comparative method. The constant comparative method enabled the researcher to analyze data to make more suitable interviews in grounded theory. In grounded theory, the constant comparative method facilitates the emergence of themes (Engward, 2013; Olson et al., 2016). The categorization and comparative analysis and data collection started immediately and simultaneously in this research. Moreover, as per the requirement of the constant comparative method, analysis of transcription was conducted again and again to accurately comprehend the perspectives of the participants and to identify common themes from various perspectives. So, the researcher examined interviews of the participants several times to make sure the perspectives of the participants were captured, and the categorization was made appropriately to conduct a constant comparative method in the present study.

The Grounded theory was used as the method of data analysis which suggested three types of coding of the data such as open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. According to the guided process of Grounded theory, the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the data is in process. This method guided researchers to be focused and consistent with the data by following the iterative process of data collection, transcription, and analysis of the data. The recorded interviews were transcribed into note pads and the transcriptions were rechecked for any error and missing of any idea or point. The interviewers made themselves familiar with the data by reading the transcriptions of the interviews and field notes again and again. The interviewers listened again and again to the recordings to maintain neutrality and correct the errors which occurred during transcriptions of the interviews.

Following the guided steps of coding of the data, the research team started the process of reading the transcripts of each interview thoroughly and properly and generated the primary process of open coding of the data and the codes were read again and again to make the process of axial coding easy and finally the research team moved to selective coding. So, these all processes were followed in the data analysis of this study according to the guidance of grounded theory. Iteration or consistent comparative analysis were followed for drafting the final report.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDIES

This section of the research paper discusses the major findings of the study. The section has been divided into different thematic headings, roughly corresponding to the various objectives. This includes the knowledge and attitude of the local people regarding various development projects of CPEC in Gwadar, their expectations, concerns, and apprehensions, and the various ways in which the different groups of the local people have been impacted by CPEC projects, both positivity and negatively.

4.1 “The Chinese are Coming”: Vague Knowledge and Mixed Attitude of Local People

As Gwadar is considered to be the epicentre of CPEC, a lot of work is going on in the city in which various projects are being executed. Some projects are currently going on the whole some are in the pipeline. Unexpectedly, most people who were interviewed for this study turned out to have very vague and obscure ideas about the various CPEC projects. While all people knew that “the Chinese are Coming to Gwadar” and they are constructing roads and other physical infrastructures, very few people were able to name and explain the various ongoing mega projects. There seems to be secrecy around CPEC projects; neither the local people seem to be interested to know about the projects nor the CPEC authorities bother much to disclose and publicize the nature of various projects. However, it was found that the male members of the community and local influential/community leaders had better knowledge about CPEC as compared to women in other groups such as fishermen, daily wage labourers, relocated people, micro-business community, etc. People mostly understood it as a project invested by China and that China is planning to come to Gwadar. A female student who was interviewed for this study stated, “I just know that CPEC is an economical corridor between Pakistan and China. I don’t know more than that”. A fisherman who was interviewed for this project stated, “I have heard from people that the Chinese are coming to Gwadar and that CPEC will bring development and business to Gwadar”. It is surprising that the fishermen usually visit the sea and wander in Gwadar on daily basis but do not know much details about the components of CPEC executed in Gwadar city. When the participants were asked regarding components of CPEC such as New international airport, dredging of berthing areas and channels, Pak China Friendship Hospital, Free Industrial Zone, etc. in Gwadar, a relocated male participant said that “All these [facilities] are not in our access, they are not for us. That’s why I don’t know much about them.”

It was found that people have mixed attitudes towards CPEC. It seemed that two important factors determined the attitude of people: knowledge about the projects and their utility for the locals. As said earlier, obscure/and vague knowledge of the locals caused negative attitudes towards CPEC because unaware people can easily be influenced by negative propaganda. Similarly, the utility of a particular project for the local people also plays a role in whether people have an overall positive or negative attitude towards CPEC. A woman political worker appreciated the facilities brought about by CPEC to the residents of Gwadar by saying that “Before, all of us used wood for cooking in our homes but today, due to CPEC, some houses have gas in their kitchen. This is a big relief for women of Gwadar”. Another male working with a fishing factory explained that “Due to CPEC, we have got good roads, east expressway, construction of the breakwater and Pak-China Hospital. Otherwise, we won’t get these things if CPEC was not initiated in Gwadar.” However, majority of the participants interviewed for this study were not so positively interpreting development activities in Gwadar. Most people believed that the native people are in a disadvantageous position and the feeling of exclusion are increasing day by day. The negative feelings are visible more among those people who have lost something, such as their land or

source of livelihood, or those who have not received any direct benefit from CPEC. For example, a fisherman angrily remarked:

“Whether CPEC will bring prosperity or not in the lives of people, it has certainly damaged my livelihood; I can’t do fishing in the water in which my father and grandfather use to do fishing”.

Local politicians and influential people had a mixed attitude; while some were focusing on how CPEC will have a positive impact the future generations, others were protesting against the cost being borne by the current generation. “Who lives to see the long-term benefits of CPEC?” expressed one politician. He continued by saying that “while some people are definitely benefiting from CPEC, including some locals, but mostly the outsiders are getting jobs and other benefits. The locals are deprived of whatever they had earlier”. In short, local people have limited and vague knowledge about the various development projects in Gwadar. Similarly, they have mixed attitudes regarding CPEC, mainly determined by lack of clear and comprehensive knowledge and lack of perceived utility of the projects for the local people.

4.2 Dreams that Shattered: Expectations and Disappointments of Local People

The government and media had created high expectations among local people when CPEC was initially started. Residents of Gwadar expected that CPEC would bring a drastic change in their lives. Almost all participants shared that they had expected to get all facilities of life, especially clean drinking water, electricity, education, health, and employment opportunities, and a bright future in Gwadar. The level of their expectations was higher in early 2013 and 2014 which started declining over time. As of now, they have fewer expectations because what they have expected has not been delivered to them. The local people also referred to earlier development projects in Gwadar in 1988 where a Belgium-based company provided health, education, water, and sanitation facilities to local people. They expected the same from CPEC.

A female university student explained, “When I heard about this project, I felt very happy that Gwadar was moving towards development and success.” Another female participant, a wife of a fisherman, explained her expectations and excitement when she first heard of CPEC:

“One day, almost ten years ago, my husband told me that the Chinese are coming to Gwadar to develop the port and to do built other projects. He said that we will get all the necessities of life – gas, electricity, and water and will get employment opportunities and live a happy life. I got very happy at that time. ... but most of these things didn’t come true”.

The history of the development of Gwadar is very old. Different countries and organizations had come and constructed different facilities from time to time. It was found during the fieldwork that the local people describe other companies before the Chinese in a positive light. It is believed that in the past companies and countries tried to involve local people in the development works and provided incentives to the locals. When CPEC /Chinese came, local people also expected a lot as it had happened in past. However, people were disappointed to find out that the Chinese companies are not eager to involve the locals in the development process. A government official of Gwadar port narrated that:

“We have seen the working environment here in 1986, 1988, and 2002 when Gwadar Mini port was constructed for fisher harbour by Belgium with the support of Pakistan and European funding. We have seen those Whites [*Goras*] that

constructed the Jetty of Pasni. Their working environment was much better than Chinese. Even for a small medical treatment and small disease they would send the people directly to Agha Khan Karachi or brought facilities from Muscat to facilitate the local people. The local people happily worked with them. Those local people are still alive and say that benefits provided by the European companies are not being provided by the Chinese”.

It is very interesting to mention that Gwadar is always compared with Dubai and Singapore by CPEC authorities, and this idea is promoted by the media in the minds of the common masses. When CPEC was announced in Gwadar by the government of Pakistan with the help of China, the common masses also built such dreams and expected that Gwadar would become developed like Dubai. A female student of the University of Gwadar recalled how her elders used to describe CPEC in very positive ways and compare Gwadar to Dubai.

“When I first heard about CPEC from my family almost 08-10 years ago, they said Gwadar would develop like Dubai. (وہدے کہ اولی رندا ء کہ سی پیکے باروا ہشکت گڈاں ما سرپد بوتان کہ گوادر چو دینی بیت انت.) We would get job opportunities and everyone would live a happy life”.

The population of Gwadar have always faced the issue of clean drinking water and they hoped that CPEC would at least provide them pure drinking water. A male political leader, who is always in political struggle for locals, said,

“In the initial days of CPEC, everyone was saying and expecting drinking water, electricity, and other such facilities and people were happy. Some people are still hopeful, but most of us have lost faith in the promises of the government”

A daily wager recalled that:

“I expected that there would be buildings and factories in Gwadar.... and then there will be job opportunities for the local people. It would be a very nice thing, but I have seen nothing of such sort. (کوریں چماں پڈے ہرس باز انت.) We just hear CPEC, CPEC, and CPEC.”

These high expectations of the local people are now changing into frustrations and disappointment. The most common dreams for which people are still looking includes employment opportunities, clean drinking water, electricity, gas, health facilities, education facilities, etc. As one of the interviewees says, “If such mega projects like that of CPEC cannot provide drinking water, better schooling, and health, then what else we should expect from it”. On the other hand, some participants, especially government officials and those directly involved in CPEC projects in various capacities, were not only satisfied but expressed a sense of pride that Gwadar has developed considerably due to CPEC. More specifically, such participants were emphasizing the development of infrastructure and tourism in Gwadar. An official explained that:

“Gwadar became a tourist point due to CPEC...business communities from different parts of the country came and invested here. For example, Taloo Group and Patel Group have come and invested a lot in the city”.

At the same time, a couple of officials were critical of CPEC. For example, one official working with CPEC pointed out that:

“When Gwadar Mini port was built by a Singaporean company, our fishing community was happy because their Jetty was also built at that time and got better livelihood opportunities. Our Expectations from CPEC were much higher but instead, the locals have been in trouble due to increased restrictions on their movement in Gwadar. I have heard from elders that the interpretation of a dream is often negative. The same looks like the case with CPEC”.

The metaphor of dream was invoked by several participants who believed that the rosy picture drawn by media in the initial days was interpreted literally by the locals who believed that CPEC will change their fate. However, as time passed by, their expectation slowly turned into concerns which have been discussed at length later in his paper.

4.3 Good for Gwadar, not good for Gwadaries

Though most of the local people are pessimistic about their future, almost all of them agreed that Gwadar will develop one day. They believe that CPEC will bring prosperity to Gwadar city in the long run. At the same time, however, the local people, especially the poor have developed the feelings that they will not see the positive impact in their lifetime. A fisherman remarked that “I am not sure these projects are meant to facilitate us or our children. Maybe our grandchildren will see a good time”. A similar answer was given by an old man who worked as a construction worker: “The constructions that you see here are not for the local people; these are for people whom we don’t know. May be the Chinese or may be people from other parts of Pakistan”. Similar other expressions from the participants indicated that they have witnessed the rapid development of Gwadar city, but at the same time, they feel excluded from the process. A local politician put it bluntly:

“CPEC is good for the future of Gwadar city, but not good for the local Gwadaries... Gwadar will become a developed city, it will bring prosperity to people living here, but I don’t know if we will live longer enough to see those days or not”.

It is observed that the local officials are more optimistic regarding the future of Gwadar. They believe that CPEC would bring development to Gwadar city and its residences of Gwadar shortly. One of the officials explained:

“See, definitely, the local people have a lot of expectations and they want to grow mustard in their palms. They seek immediate benefit. But things do not work according to our expectations. Gwadar is bound to develop because of CPEC, but people have to wait for it”.

Another official elaborated that:

“Let the port start proper operation and other projects are completed, you will see an increase in business opportunities, more jobs, and better facilities of life. It will bring prosperity. There are water and electricity problems but will be solved soon. A beautiful future is waiting for the people of Gwadar. (گوادری مردمانی) “واستء گهنری کیت انت ء گوادری مردمانی وشین باندتے راہچار آنتے.”

Along with this, some participants also pointed out that most of the opportunities provided by CPEC projects are cashed by rich people, both local and non-locals, while the poor and ordinary local people are suffering as collateral damage. A female student, for example, pointed out that

most of the educational opportunities, such as scholarships are availed by rich people, not the poor. A local businessman said that the “CPEC has provided business opportunities but you need to have some capital to avail these”. Similar other comments indicate that the CPEC is indeed showing positive results in the shape of providing educational and business opportunities but most rich people are benefiting from them.

In short, local people have witnessed a visible change in the infrastructure of the city. They agree that Gwadar will become Dubai one day. However, they are not hopeful that they will see that Dubai in their lifetime. The current generation of Gwadaries will witness the rapid rise of Gwadar city, but their generation, especially the poor people such as fishing communities, might not enjoy its associated benefit.

4.4 “Roads, Roads... and other such things being Constructed Everywhere”: Development Projects and Opportunities for Local People

Despite the pessimism expressed by many locals, CPEC is right on its way to ‘changing the game’ in the region. Gwadar is rapidly becoming an international city and a hub of economic activities. The physical infrastructure, especially the networks of roads and highways alone will be enough to connect Gwadar with the rest of the country and create economic opportunities and promote local and international business. Because of these roads, Gwadar is no more an isolated, faraway place. For many people, the first sign of development in Gwadar is the networks of roads being constructed in the city. When asked about how has CPEC changed Gwadar, a female student remarked:

“I don’t see much except the decoration of Gwadar with roads”.

Responding to the same question, a daily-wager remarked:

“Roads, roads, small roads, bigger roads being constructed everywhere... and other such things”.

Elaborating the “other such things”, a small business owner explained that “There are some good things such public hospitals, parks, stadiums, and industries etc. from which a lot of people will benefit”. Even the fishermen who were dislocated from their native homes acknowledged that development is taking place. A fisherman explained that:

“Though our movement has been restricted in the city as we can no longer catch fish in the sea as we use to and cannot wander freely in the city, some of our community members have benefited from various projects. A few people I know have earned a lot”.

Another old fisherman explained that

“Some of us will, may be our children, will definitely see different Gwadar. We have lived our life, good or bad, but our children will enjoy a good life because of CPEC”.

Apart from transportation, roads, airports, etc., CPEC has also promoted tourism in Gwadar. Different tourist attractions have been constructed and people of other districts of Balochistan as well as Pakistan come for visit. The coming of tourists automatically benefits the locals and local hoteling system. In an interview, a woman political leader explained:

“The good thing I have noted is tourism. People from different areas for visit in Gwadar and it has benefited some of the owners of hotels and shopkeepers”.

A beautiful cricket stadium has been constructed in corner of the city which has will go a long way in promoting sports in Gwadar. A construction worker explained that:

“People from outside come to see the stadium and takes photographs and enjoy stay in Gwadar. This a good trend as this will promote tourism”. CPEC has also enhanced the beauty of Gwadar City with its parks and gardens”.

A male political leader admired the development of Gwadar city and commented that:

“I don’t know how the people measure the improvement of living standards. Marine drive is established, and everyone can see and visit it to refresh themselves. Family members come to enjoy in the park and people do jogging under the lights.”

The international airport is under construction in Gwadar which would be one of the biggest airports in Pakistan. The roads and airport would enhance the connectivity of Gwadar with the rest of the world. A local political leader explained the opportunities brought about by CPEC for the common people:

“The coastal highway, Gwadar Port, and Mirani dam in Gwadar have greatly eased our lives. The coastal highway from Jiwani to Karachi makes our life easy because of all the things that come from Karachi. We visit Karachi for treatment as well as our children go for education there. Besides this, the Sawad dam is a project of CPEC, which supplies drinking water to the city which is a positive thing.... Some local politicians and groups have been trying to ignore the positive development going on in Gwadar and elsewhere in the province. Of course, there are issues and the local people are justified in protesting, but the positive aspect of CPEC should not be completely ignored. Our people are short-sighted. As the time goes, more positivity will become visible to people”.

Another positive development which was pointed out by many participants includes the improved and modern health facilities. Earlier, Gwadar was considered a remote place with negligible health facilities. People used to travel to Karachi and other cities for minor medical treatment. The Pak-China friendship hospital, a project of CPEC in Gwadar city, is seen as local people-oriented because the local people directly get health facilities and services. A local man explained that before CPEC, no reliable surgeon was available in Gwadar and that health services have greatly improved with the construction of Pak-China hospital. Almost all participants expressed their joy over the construction of the hospital and termed it as a tangible benefit of CPEC for the local population.

Similarly, CPEC has also improved the educational sector in Gwadar. A vocational training centre has been constructed here which is aimed at proving vocational training to the local youths. An official explained that:

“People are getting a quality education and also through CPEC, we have a Vocation Training Center which is going to be functional soon. More such projects are coming in the future”.

At the same time, some participants pointed out the need for more educational infrastructure in Gwadar. Most of the participants were of the view that education has not received its due attention in the CPEC project. Except for a technical centre and a school, not much can be seen for improving the educational level or standard in Gwadar.

The most significant impact of CPEC in Gwadar, as well as the rest of the country, will be giving a boost to commerce and business. The improved infrastructure of the city will attract investors from across the region which will turn Gwadar into a vibrant economic hub. The local business community has already observed this change. In the words of a participant,

“Local business is better these days and banking system is also improved due to foreign investment due to better infrastructure such roads. Land price increased. Investors and other people from the outside will bring new ideas and cultural diversity which will make Gwadar a beautiful city.”

Another businessperson shared that:

“Since the last 5 to 6 years, I have seen changes and improvements in my business slowly and gradually through my hard work. So, I don’t know if the improvement in my business is due to CPEC or the overpopulation of Gwadar city”.

It can be inferred from the above comment that the population has increased in the city which has caused an upward increase in demand for local goods and services. This is how macro-level projects have micro-level impacts.

Another impact of the increasing population of Gwadar is an increase in the prices of land. Many people have migrated toward the city for better living standards and investment. Similarly, the non-local investors have started real estate businesses due to which the prices of land and houses saw an upward rise. For example, Patel Group and Taloo Group are two business groups in Pakistan that came to buy lands in Gwadar. The increase in prices of land is generally considered a positive impact of CPEC. On the other hand, some participants believed that the blind sale of land by the local people to the non-locals was an economic loss, in the long run. An official recalled that,

“In 2000 the price of land in Gwadar was very low. ... one Acre of land costed from 2000 to 5000 rupees. The price of lands went up when the first port was built. People of Gwadar did not understand the situation and they had sold their lands to non-local investors. I told many people that Gwadar was going to be developed and prices of land would increase but they laugh at me.”

The increase in the prices of land is considered a short-term benefit for locals. A student argued that an increase in the prices of the land is positive in the short-term only; in the longer term, it is a loss of land to non-locals.

A fisherman explained the increasing business opportunities in the city:

“Many people are migrating to Gwadar and rent of houses are increasing. You can earn a lot if you have someone house for rent in the city. Businesses are increasing, and many shops and markets are being built up in the city. For example, after the construction of Marin drive, some people have opened tea and fry’s shops. We hope by the passage of time we all be benefited from CPEC in some ways”.

Local people have benefited greatly from this trend and most of them have sold their agricultural and barren land at high prices to investors who have initiated housing colonies around the city. At the same time, poor people have suffered who are being pushed out of the city or restricted to urban ghettos. This has been explained later in detail.

In sort, the tall expectations and rosy pictures associated by the local population of Gwadar with CPEC have not come true in totality. At the same time, clear light is visible at the end of the tunnel as Gwadar has rapidly been changing into a developed city with improved infrastructure, more jobs and business opportunities, tourism, educational and health services, and increased business activities. All these developments are having a positive impact on the lives of the local people, directly or indirectly.

4.5 Re-location and Compensation: A Success Story in Gwadar

CPEC has caused relocation of local people living near the Gwadar port. Contrary to the expectations of the research team, it was found that most of those people who were re-located from their native villages have been feeling happy and satisfied for the reason that the government has compensated them in cash and has provided them with alternatives land/plots for construction of houses. Although some of these people lost their jobs; overall, they were happy because re-location resulted in improved living standards for these people.

It was also found that, in some cases, local people have willingly accepted the proposal of relocation during the constriction of Gwadar port (before the inception of the CPEC projects). They wanted to get the basic amenities of life promised by the government. A micro-businessman expressed his satisfaction over their displacement:

“People previously living in *Kacha* houses have been able to build *Pakka* houses for themselves with the compensation money provided by the government the compensation is provided according to need and house size. We had four rooms for which we were given 16 lakhs rupees and two flats in Singhar housing scheme”.

Another male relocated participant elaborated the relocation and compensation mechanism:

“We were compensated properly. (هنو مارا درس دنيگ بوتگ.) They first counted the rooms and saw the structure of the house. Later they measured the lands and according to all details we were given money. And we were given Rs. 34,50,000. Our lives have changed positively. (منے زندگی گہتر بوتگ.) Here we feel safe but there we were afraid that the water may flow away our homes, as our homes were very close to the sea. This place is safe and has good facilities”.

A male relocated fisherman explained his views regarding the process of displacement and their apprehension at that time:

“When we were told to be displaced, we were very shocked. When they said that we were going to be shifted to New Mullah Band, we resisted and protested because we thought that it would affect our life and livelihood as the sea would be very far from us. But today I am happy that I agreed and shifted here. When we were in our old Mullah, we had congested houses but here we have got an open and wide house.”

Most of the relocated and resettled people also seemed satisfied with the process of relocation. The authority consulted the local people and sought their consent before re-location. Most people willingly relocated for the money which was offered by the government. A relocated person shared how they were relocated:

“We were consulted and we were issued notice before relocation. They also told us, again and again, to be prepared for displacement. They have made our walls and provided us with money for the construction of houses. After completion of all things, they gave us a 5-month deadline for shifting. They also had given flats to every family in the Singhar housing scheme. It was very nice for us”.

It must be noted here that many people later on sold the flats provided to them by the government for various reasons. It also needs to be noted that relocation has both positive and negative impacts on the people. Relocation/displacement can affect occupation, education, health, livelihood, businesses, and socio-cultural aspects of people’s lives. The most visible impact of relocation in Gwadar was the change in the means of livelihood of people who used to live along the coast and who were dependent on fishing and salt making. A relocated person pointed out that their occupations have been affected as they used to work in salt fields which are now far away from their new location. Another male pointed out that:

“Everything here is far from like the city - schools, hospitals, etc. and the sea is far away, and our works of fishing are affected. We all were neighbours and relatives there. Now here we have to interact with unrelated people. Our children's education is affected because the schools are far away and transportation is costly”.

It is evident from the above excerpt that the re-located people have to live far away from the sea and the city, making it difficult for them to earn a livelihood. Moreover, people feel nostalgic about the social structure and communal life of their old village, which has been replaced by a feeling of estrangement in the new location. An old man contrasted the cost and benefits of relocation:

“Before, we were living in a very congested place. Now we have a wide house in a beautiful area. We lost our native land but received a handsome amount from the government. We feel happy here but we miss the sea which is far away now. We would easily go to the sea for fishing but now we face difficulties of transport and security”.

In short, the government has successfully managed the relocation issue. People feel satisfied with the process and the compensation received. At the same time, however, some relocated people claimed that they are still waiting for some of the promises to be fulfilled: “We are well compensated, (مارا سرگور و هير کتنگ) and we are happy in our new house but still, the government has not provided us electricity, water, hospital, and schools which were promised”. Such demand seems to be cross-cutting among all communities in Gwadar, whether relocated or not.

4.6 “A Sword is Hanging above our Heads”. Fear of Displacement among the Local People

Like any other mega-development project, CPEC has caused what is known as “development induced displacement”. While some people have been already displaced and relocated (discussed earlier), other participants expressed the fear of displacement from their houses. When asked as to what is their biggest concern, a 39 years old community leader put this fear in the context in a vivid manner:

“The locals of Gwadar are suffering from the fear of relocation from the beginning. In the first master plan in 2004 and 2005, the areas of the old population of Gwadar from Gwadar port to Javed Complex were not mentioned as residential areas. Rather, these areas have been referred to as commercial and warehouses area. For us, this is a hanging sword above our heads and anytime the government can order us to leave the area. We have to live in constant fear of losing our house and land”.

The local people are afraid of being displaced or relocated from this city in the future because the social, economic, and geographical conditions are becoming unfavourable for native inhabitants. A female student expressed her view regarding the fears of locals:

“People are afraid that the old city will be shifted from here. Since CPEC is a big project, it will need a large space. Their Jetty is also being shifted to Sur which will be bad for them. The people will get compelled to migrate, as they are not safe here”.

The fear of displacement becomes part of the lives of poor people living in Gwadar. An old man argued that:

“Gwadar is becoming a city for the rich, and as such, the poor will ultimately be pushed out of the city to make way for the rich people... The local poor have nothing but a piece of land which is being taken away.”

Due to this fear, there is uncertainty among the locals, especially the poor who live near mega-projects. A male shopkeeper remarked that

“The worry circulates in my mind sometimes. That’s why I am not investing in my business here as I am not sure if we will be allowed to stay here for longer. Many people say that one day we will be asked to leave”.

A female student had a similar opinion and even predicted that “As long as CPEC is completed, the government will ask the local people to take the money and go elsewhere. It has already happened; people have been taken out from their village behind the airport”. Similar views were expressed by a male daily wage labourer who said that “We are afraid that one day after the completion of these mega-projects, these non-locals (Sindhi, Punjabi, Chinese, etc.) would kick the native residents out of Gwadar.”

When the researcher asked some participants whether they would like to willingly re-locate and get compensation for their homes and land or not, some interviewees expressed anger that CPEC will snatch their ancestral land from them. Other participants, however, seemed to be willing if they receive a good bargain. One old man said:

“Money is attractive, but our home is our home. Besides, it depends on what else is being offered apart from money. If employment is given, for example, then people might be willing to leave their homes”.

A women participant, who was an active social and political worker, pointed out that “The biggest fear of the locals is that they will be displaced from here in the future. This sea where we are working and earning will not be ours tomorrow.” Similar remarks were received from a male participant:

“The local people are gradually being taken out. Gwadar won’t be the same anymore; rather, it will be a new city for businessmen and investors”.

To cut it short, there is a general and constant fear of displacement among the local population, especially those who are poor and those who live closer to the sites of major development projects. It also seems the people might be willing to relocate provided that the government ensure proper compensation to them not only in cash but also in kinds, such as jobs and alternative employment opportunities.

4.7 Alien in My Native Town: Illumination of Gwadar and Alienation of Gwadaries

As the hustles and bustles in Gwadar city are increasing day by day due to ongoing CPEC projects, tourism, and business and commerce, the local people are feeling a sense of alienation in their native town. When asked for the reason, a government official said:

“It is because most of the local people are not part of the CPEC projects. Not enough people are getting jobs in CPEC projects and they continue to engage in their old occupations. Most people are uneducated and they don’t even know the nature and purposes of various projects. They are not feeling a sense of relationship to the new developments going on in Gwadar”.

These remarks from a participant explain that there is a lack of sufficient sense of attachment between the local people and the CPEC projects. Secondly, it was found that the local people of Gwadar are fearful of the rapid demographic change in the city. They think that their language and culture are going to vanish by the non-locals. The population of non-Balochi speakers has been increasing since CPEC. One of the officials elaborated:

“Some the locals think their language and culture are being vanished. For example, a large number of people are migrating to Gwadar which outnumber the Gwadari people. Almost 45% are Balochi speakers 55% are not Balochi speakers. If tomorrow they get domiciled/locality, then our slogan would be a ‘quota for Gwadaris’ as the local people are becoming in minority”.

Relocation of the locals coupled with the influx of people from other districts and provinces is changing the identity and outlooks of Gwadar. It has been observed that due to the increased number of non-local people, hate between the locals and non-locals has increased. For example, locals hate the people of Turbat and Punjgor as they think that they are taking the job opportunities and benefits of CPEC. A male political leader responded:

“The local people are fearful that a demographic change may happen in Gwadar. They think that they will soon be replaced by non-locals because they (local people) are mostly uneducated, and they lack skills”.

A female student put it more vividly by saying that

“آہمے ترساں کہ وتی شہرے را دارمدے باں۔”

“They fear that in future they will be strangers in their new city.”

As pointed out earlier, there seems to be a communication gap between the CPEC authority and the local people. People know less about CPEC and its plans in Gwadar. A micro businessperson claimed that up to 90 percent of the locals are unaware of the development projects of CPEC because the authorities do the work secretly and they do not inform the locals about these

projects. This situation is one of the reasons of why the local people have developed a feeling of alienation. They mostly don't understand what is going on in their city.

Moreover, some of the participants also pointed out that the local culture is getting eroded and there is no mechanism/policy for the preservation of the local culture, language and historical places which used to be the identity of Gwadar city. For instance, a male micro businessman stated that:

“I say it (immigration) will damage the local culture, language, and history because people are coming from outside here with different cultures, languages, history, and identity which will marginalize local culture and local people and the locals may lose their identity and culture. There will be a mix-culture, language, identity, custom and traditions, etc.

When asked for an example of how the history of Gwadar is vanishing, a senior, educated participant point out:

“There used to be a big fort (*morcha*) of Portuguese army at the top of Koh-e-Batil, but it has been demolished and you can't find it there now. Instead of protecting such sites, they are destroying them.”

While historical sites are destroyed and eliminated, modern monuments and buildings are constructed and illuminated to increase their visibility. Such developments are alienating the local Gwadaries. As a result, the locals feel that Gwadar is getting away from Gwadaries.

4.8 Something Fishy Fishy: Chines Trawling and the Issues of Local Fishing Community in Gwadar

About 70% of the population's livelihood depends on marine resources and fishing for the past several generations. The fishing communities consider themselves to be the first causality of CPEC projects as their lives and livelihoods have been affected in a number of ways. They also consider themselves to be the true locals of Gwadar because most of them have been living in the old town of Gwadar for centuries. As explained earlier, some of these people have been relocated by the government to other places, away from the sea due to which they find it difficult to reach the sea and fish. In other words, their source of livelihood has been disturbed. The construction of the East Bay Expressway along the coast has further restricted their access to the sea. A young fisherman pointed towards this and said:

“We are not allowed for fishing near the port where more expensive fish exist. The East Bay Expressway has blocked the sea and blocked the ways leading to sea for us, we used to fish in this area, now they have blocked it and do not even let us walk there.”

Likewise, a female relocated participant elaborated how the fisherfolks have been facing restrictions to the sea.

“For three years now, the fishermen are facing adverse impacts of these projects, ranging from diminishing space for fishing to more restrictions on our movement in and around the sea. Ten years before, everything was great. There was a lot of freedom and fish were also in plenty”.

Almost all participants pointed out the increasing security check post in the city due to which the local people feel restriction on their movement towards the sea. A fisherman explained that:

“Security has limited our business and our main fishing harbour/Jetty is being snatched from us. The proper and best timing for catching fish is 5 to 6 in the morning but they do not let us into the sea at this time. They are not from here, they do not know the timings, and they (security forces) impose their timing which is causing disruptions to our livelihood.”

People are also afraid that after the completion of the East Bay Expressway, the way to Gwadar harbour/Jetty will be blocked permanently, depriving the fishing communities of their main source of livelihood. Besides, as explained by one fisherman, the fishing opportunities and behaviours have also been affected. Earlier people used to catch shrimp fish which is expensive but that place has been occupied by port and now people are not allowed to catch fish there.

The issue of Chinese trawling in the sea has created much unrest among the fishing communities and other groups of local people. The local people alleged that the Chinese are taking all things from them one by one. They pointed out that due to trawling by Chinese companies, there will be less or no fish in the sea and it will make the fishermen unemployed. During the fieldwork in Gwadar in July 2021, the researchers observed and participated in a *Jerga* which was organized by all political and fishing community parties to raise the issue of illegal fishing by Chinese and Sindhi trawlers and the use of the conical net by the trawlers which have caused much damage to marine life in the sea. One of the speakers of the Jirga said,

“We are the sons of the soil and know how to protect our sea. We request the provisional and federal government to take seriously our legal and constitutional demands, stop Chinese trawling immediately. If not, then we will resist”.

Another local fisherman argued that:

“Trawling is a sort of genocide of fish and other marine species... fish give eggs in the summer season and we the locals do not fish in that season. The chines don't take such care”.

According to one fisherman, the Chinese have brought around 100 trawlers which have seriously disturbed the livelihood of the locals and if the trawling culture remains the same, there will be unemployment and poverty for the local fishing communities. Ban on illegal Chinese trawling was also one of the demands of the protest by the local population in Gwadar in November 2021 led by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman. In response to these protests, the government of Balochistan issued a notification in November 2021 in which a ban was imposed on illegal fishing/trawling in twelve Nautical Miles of the Gwadar Sea area.

It was also pointed out by participants that the government is planning to shift and relocate the fishing communities to Sur-Bandar area, way from Gwadar port. “Why should we go to Sur-Bandar when our ancestral homes are here?” asked on fisherman, angrily. In view of the port becoming operational in which big ships will berth in the areas of fishing, the local fisherfolks were relocated from old Mulla Band to new Mulla temporarily where they do not have a Jetty and protection breakwaters and other facilities. It looks like the fishing communities have realized that the government will soon force them to relocate for which they are already bargaining for more compensation. As a political leader told the researchers that:

“We know that the government will relocate us from the old jetty (it is nearby the Gwadar port) and so the government should make an alternative jetty, breakwaters for us and provide modern skills of fishing and provide markets for sale and purchase of fish”.

A male political leader shared uncertainly regarding the future position of the fisher community in Gwadar:

“The authorities took control of the old harbour and provided new harbours in Sur Bandar and Pishukan (two small fishing towns), but they are not as facilitated as they should have been. They have in their mind to shift the population to another place, but the concerned authorities have no proper plans for this.”

To conclude, the fishing communities of Gwadar who constitute almost 70% of the local population have been affected the most by CPEC. Their exclusive dependence on the sea has made them vulnerable to displacement because CPEC projects have limited their access to the sea. Their sources of income are shrinking, and the Chinese trawling has almost threatened their livelihood. Some of them have been relocated while others will be relocated sooner or later. They are the most vulnerable have will continue to be affected by CPEC projects. Hence, affirmative actions are needed to protect them and their source of livelihood.

4.9 Beyond the Glittering Port: The Ghettoization of Local Population in Gwadar City

It was observed during the fieldwork that local people in Gwadar have been confined to “Old Gwadar” where the standard of living is very low as compared to the new Gwadar which is glittering with lights and where development is going on day and night. Old Gwadar faces a severe shortage of clean drinking water, electricity, and other such faculties. The streets are narrow and unpaved with *Kacha* houses. Poverty is visible everywhere in old Gwadar. There are rumours that this is intentional as the government wants these people to voluntarily migrate elsewhere. A male political leader said, “They want us to move out, to leave the place. But where should we go and why? It is our land, and we should be provided facilities here.” A female student elaborated and contrasted the two worlds; the old and the new Gwadar in the following words:

“I have seen the local area of Gwadar such as Shado Band and Ismaili Mohalla. There the people do not have the basic facilities ... CPEC has decorated the surface of Gwadar but if you visit inside of (old) Gwadar you will see the nasty Gwadar where no signs of CPDEC are visible”.

The common perception of people is that the government is not facilitating the local people because the government is interested in the Land (Gawadar) not the people (Gwadaries). A male participant explained:

“The old city is in threat as it is near the port. The people of the old city are not getting their facilities like roads, clean water, and electricity. It is like people are being forced to live leave the city”.

It has commonly been observed by the local people that roads are being constructed in those areas where there are no people; where there are people, there are no roads. There is dirt everywhere in the old city where poor people live. The glittering Gwadar port and the rest of the city is clean and beautiful; the opposite can be seen in the old city. The locals frequently compared

themselves and their condition to Lyari Town, Karachi: the people of Lyari are the original and the oldest population of Karachi. Today, they live in the most neglected and underdeveloped section of the port city of Karachi as migrants have taken the central place in the new Karachi. Lyari is more like a slum as compared to other parts of Karachi which are considerably developed. As Official said,

“The local people fear and think that these big projects are not for them, and they fear that their future will be like the original people of Lyari”.

This process of ghettoization, in which the local, poor population are increasingly marginalized has increased the feeling of estrangement, discrimination, alienation, and altogether elimination of the local people.

DISCUSSION

Mega development projects like CPEC always have diverse effects on the lives of people. While the intentions of the policymakers and planners are always good and are usually based on collective benefits at the macro level, some people at the micro level might face the burden (Morse and Berger, 1992; Flood, 1997). This is quite natural. However, it is the responsibility of the policymakers and authorities to ensure that the damage is minimum and compensates the local people as far as possible. This study has been conducted with the assumption that CPEC projects in Gwadar would have positively as well as negatively affected the local people of Gwadar, and that the perspective of the native people living there must be explored and scrutinized. In this section, we broadly discuss the various findings of the study to arrive at some policies recommendation.

It was startling to find out that the local people have a very vague knowledge of CPEC and its associated projects. Except for a few well-known projects such as Gwadar port and East Bay Expressway, people are hardly able to know the names and natures of various ongoing projects. The common mis/perception is that the Chinese are coming to take over Gwadar and that the local people will be soon displaced to other areas. Indeed, displacement has taken place as a number of fishing communities have been relocated by the government. However, the way this process of re-location has been executed by the government is a textbook example of a success story in Gwadar as the re-located people were found satisfied from the prior consultation and compensation. At the same time, people living in the old city were found to be living under the constant fear of displacement. While some of these people will resist their relocation, our analysis shows that most people are willing to relocate voluntarily if the government provides them with enough incentives. It is because those already displaced are better off, having improved living conditions, and there seem to be no signs of regret among them.

The local people seem to exaggerate their issues and assert that “we have received no benefit of CPEC”. In reality, however, most people benefited indirectly or directly in various ways. For example, business opportunities for local entrepreneurs have increased manifold. Public hospitals, parks, stadiums, industries, and other such infrastructures are catering to the needs of the common people. The influx of migrant workers from other parts of the country has increased the demand for housing and hoteling which has benefited the locals. Land prices have increased due to which the local landowners have earned a handsome amount of money. The local products such as Gwadari Halwa (sweets) have found new markets and its demand has increased. Gwadar is fast becoming a tourist spot and the entertaining and recreation facilities are now accessible to the local people as well. Despite these tangible benefits, the local people want more and more. It is mainly because they have developed much higher expectations from CPEC due to media hype around the project, and because people don't know how to assess the indirect benefit that they might have received or will receive from development projects in Gwadar. Negative propaganda against CPEC has also visibly impacted the perception and attitude of the local people. There is a need for the government to highlight the positive impacts of CPEC on the local people and to counter the negative propaganda.

However, some of the issues of the local people are real and government need to revisit its policies and practice in Gwadar. For example, the old city is almost neglected by authorities due to which the feelings of discrimination and ghettoization have developed among the local inhabitants.

Similarly, shortage of clean drinking water and frequent electricity load shedding are issues that need immediate attention from the government. Solution of these issues will also work as a goodwill gesture towards the locals from the government which will help in regaining the confidence of the local people of Gwadar. People must be made to feel part of CEPEC projects by providing them with more employment opportunities. The fishing communities are the most affected group among the local population and constitute the majority of the locals. Their rights to fishing and their access to the sea have been restricted by megaprojects. Increasing trawling by Chinese and other non-local communities have threatened the livelihood of the fishing communities. The provision of alternative sites and routes can help mitigate the feelings of suffering among the poor fisherfolks.

The hallmark of grounded theory is the emergence of a theory to explain the interlocking variables of the phenomenon under study. Based on the findings of the current study regarding the perspective of the local population of Gwadar regarding CPEC, we propose the following seven propositions to explain and predict how the local people feel, act, and react towards CPEC.

The direction of people's perception could either be positive or negative which depends on a few factors.

1. High expectations of people from a development project ultimately lead to intense feelings of disappointment; in turn, people tend to exaggerate their issues and problems;
2. If people are national-oriented and focus on the macro-level impacts of a project, their perception is mostly positive; but if they are local-oriented and focus on the micro-level, their perception is mostly negative.
3. If a group of people has received some direct benefits of the projects, such as jobs, their perception is positive, otherwise negative.
4. Indirect benefits of a project do not play a significant role in determining the direction of people's attitude about a project.
5. Immediate, short-term, and tangible benefits play a more significant role in determining the attitude of people.
6. Prior examples /models/ precedents play a vital role in determining the thinking pattern and attitudes of local stakeholders.
7. Lack of awareness regarding the nature of CPEC and its importance makes people susceptible to negative propaganda. This knowledge gap is usually filled by vested interest groups / political leaders for their propaganda.

Elaborated examples could be found in this paper which can help the readers understand and comprehend the above-listed propositions. For the sake of repetition, we are not going to explain them again. Instead, we present the conclusion of the study and put the seven-point theory into policy recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This qualitative study has been conducted in the city of Gwadar to explore the perspectives of the local people regarding the developmental projects of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The researchers have used an interview guide to collect in-depth qualitative data from the participants. This study provides insight into the knowledge, perception, understandings, and grievances of the local people about the developmental projects of CPEC in Gwadar. The study revealed the various factors which influence the attitude of people towards the projects and how people interpret the impacts of CPEC projects on their lives. It is concluded that there is a communication gap among the local people and CPEC authorities/government due to which most of the local people have vague knowledge and blurred understandings of CPEC projects. The various groups of local people such as fisherfolks, the micro-businessmen, local politicians, students, and government officials have different perspectives and were variously impacted by CPEC.

CPEC has definitely changed Gwadar city and a lot of visible developments could be witnessed in the shape of improved roads connecting Gwadar to the rest of the country, hospitals, schools, parks, stadiums, etc. which have greatly benefited the inhabitants of the city, both locals and the non-locals. These developments have directly or indirectly benefited the local population in the shape of employment, improved business opportunities, tourism, improved health and education facilities, and the like. However, the locals have also developed feelings of discrimination and alienation as they believe that the government has failed to provide basic facilities, especially drinking water, electricity, and gas. Frustration among the local people, coupled with their blurred knowledge of CPEC, is being manipulated by local politicians and other groups who present a negative picture of CPEC. The fishing communities are the most directly affected, mostly in the negative sense. Some of them have lost their livelihood due to relocation, others have no access to the sea due to the construction of CPEC projects along with the coasts. Those local communities who were re-located by the government were feeling satisfied as they were duly compensated by the government. Overall, people tend to exaggerate their problems and want to gain more and more. Some of their genuine issues need to be solved so that the feeling of deprivation is reduced among the local people.

5.2 Policy Implications

The success of any development project depends on the cooperation and coordination of local communities living in that particular area. One of the aims of this study was to find out how the grievances and concerns of the local people might be better managed by the government and CPEC authorities. For this purpose, the study recommends the following measures which will hopefully help in mainstreaming the local people into the development process.

Employment Opportunities to the Natives

There must be a policy in place prioritizing the employment rights of the locals in mega projects. The private sector should also be bound to give more employment opportunities to the locals who are currently feeling neglected. The provision of jobs to these local people will glue them with CPEC and will create a sense of belonging which is currently lacking.

Development of Fishing and Marine Life Policy

There is a dire need for a comprehensive policy for fisheries and marine life. Given that most of the local population is dependent on fishing, and given that the marine life is going to be adversely affected by CPEC projects, the government must devise a policy and set out priorities for the fishery industry in Gwadar. This should include aspects such as maximizing the profitability of the sector and maintaining as many fishing jobs as needed and fishery assessment to determine what level of fishing can be sustained. In specific, the Chinese and other trawlers who pose a threat to the fish colonies in the sea must be stopped or better managed. The fishery rights of the local fisherfolks in certain specified spots of the sea must be protected by legal measures.

Special Developmental Package for the Fishing Community

Along with legislation to protect and promote the fishery sector in Gwadar, the local fishing communities that are the most vulnerable and who are considered to be the 'first causality' of CPEC projects should be given special attention. They have the right to receive tangible dividends of development. A special developmental package should include the development of alternative fishing areas along the coast, facilitation of fish marketing, provision of advanced fishing machinery and training, alternative employment opportunities, and attractive re-location packages in case of displacement.

Drinking-Water and Electricity Supply

Lack of drinking water and electricity were pointed out by participants as their most pressing issue. Almost all groups interviewed from this study raised these two problems, among others. Both of these issues were also personally felt by the research team while collecting data in Gwadar. The increasing population of the city will further aggravate these issues, leading to a feeling of neglect among the locals. Proper arrangement for the provision of these two facilities will greatly help in reducing the ill-feeling among the locals. Besides, the provision of these facilities will also help in the promotion of a conducive environment for attracting tourists and investors to Gwadar.

Skill Training and Promotion of SME

As per the findings of this study, the local people of Gwadar lack appropriate skills and attitudes due to which they are not deemed fit for employment in various projects. Their traditional skills cannot compete with the highly skilled workers from outside Gwadar. In order to make them more competitive, the government should arrange skill development training and promote small and medium enterprises for the local people. There is a skill development centre being constructed in Gwadar, but more diversified measures are required to increase the employability skills of the local people.

Engaging and Educating the Locals on the Natures and Purpose of CPEC Projects

There seems to be a communication gap between the local people and the CPEC authorities/ Government. Common people mostly don't know what is going on, due to which they find CPEC unrelated to their lives. Lack of information also makes the local people more susceptible to negative propaganda against CPEC by political and anti-state elements. Efforts must be made to engage the people in CPEC by increasing the awareness of the locals about the purpose, nature, and potential benefits of various projects. A "community engagement / public relation wing" can

be introduced in CPEC authority for the sole purpose of public engagement and countering propaganda against CPEC.

Ensuring Development of Locals Population through Corporate Social Responsibility

Lastly, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must be invoked more vigorously in Gwadar. All corporate groups should be bound to engage in the social welfare of the local people. For example, the big real estate business groups/ housing societies working in Gwadar can be asked to provide some services (e.g., street pavement) for the local areas as well. A proper policy should be developed in order to channel the CSR fund more systematically.

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