



# Dupont Summit 2014

..... Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy Issues

December 5, 2014 ♦ Historic Whittemore House, Washington, DC

The Policy Studies Organization

## **Budding Scholars Conference**

Elsa T. Khwaja – *George Mason University*

### **"Social Complexity in the 'Aid Architecture': The Network Effects of Development Interventions in Afghanistan and Pakistan"**

Nearing ten years of the Paris Declaration of Aid-Effectiveness, a critical reflection on the established core principles, such as “ownership” and “mutual accountability,” is warranted. This study aims to contribute to the discussion on the significance of relationships among key players in aid networks as a critical indicator of aid-impact. Assessing how transactions diffuse and how influence and power are embedded within the social structures of development interventions can provide crucial insights about outcomes. Greater complexity is evident in fragile and conflict-affected regions like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Establishing development programs across Afghanistan and Pakistan based on the unique provincial contexts and collective involvement of local partners has been a challenging endeavor. Attributes of network structures reveal varying social constraints towards inclusive and participatory development. This research argues that fundamental socio-cultural heterogeneity among donor and recipient actors and information asymmetry characterizes the hindrances toward a coherent strategy of successful aid-impact. An inter-organizational networks approach not only can reveal the positive and negative externalities evident in these social structures, but also allow for a better understanding of what factors challenge trust-building and social interconnectivity among donor organizations and their local counterparts.

The study investigates the whole-network structures and attributes of relations within two of the largest and most successful rural development programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Institutional stakeholders include donors, international and local NGOs, funding mechanisms, local beneficiary groups, national and subnational governments, and other local civil society organizations. A combined theoretical framework of social capital and complexity, in particular, bonding and bridging social capital and the concepts of homophily and diversity will be analyzed. An interplay of complexity and social capital tools, language, and conceptualization can help explain the narrative of emerging social networks. The network interactions within the aid social structures and processes are analyzed with regard to density, degree, betweenness-centrality, and community detection. Ultimately, the objective of the study is to determine if greater interconnectivity among actors embedded within the bounded network of the development intervention provide evidence of greater positive social capital, and hence leading to a successful outcome. Network visualizations are conducted for the two case studies alongside an analysis of the basic network outputs and metrics. Though the analysis is a macro, whole-network approach as the first phase of a more elaborate research design, a discussion of further investigation for the next steps of the process will incorporate the significance of micro-interdependencies within and among the aid-networks.



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## **Biography**

**Elsa T. Khwaja** is a doctoral student and graduate research assistant at the George Mason University School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs. She has worked in the development field for several years, including with Chemonics International, as an Associate in the Afghanistan and Pakistan Division and the Southern Africa Division. Prior to that, she was a Brent Scowcroft Award Fellow at the Aspen Strategy Group. She also worked at the Embassy of Pakistan as a research assistant for the Pakistani Ambassador to the United States as well as two NGOs in Karachi, Pakistan. Her doctoral research broadly involves international development policy and the social capital-aid effectiveness nexus in conflict-afflicted states, and more specifically focusing on donor and recipient networks within development interventions/programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

