A seminar on ‘Anthropology: Its Importance and Implications for Policy and Practice’ was collaboratively organised by the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, in the University of Sindh in Pakistan, and Anthropology in Action (Figure 1). The event was also supported by the civil society organisations Al-Mehran Rural Development Organization (AMRDO) and DevCon. The objective of the event was to create awareness among the public and the media regarding the importance and scope of anthropology and how anthropologists can better design social policies and interventions that have limited negative unintended consequences. The speakers were academic and practicing anthropologists who delivered lectures based on their personal extensive encounters with development in Pakistan.

Mr Mukhtar Qazi, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology (Figure 2), inaugurated the event and welcomed participants. He thanked Anthropology in Action for the support in organising the seminar, which brought together the members of civil society organisations, media persons and the students of the university to make them realise the importance of anthropology. Mr M. Sajjad Abro, on behalf of Anthropology in Action, also thanked and welcomed participants and described the agenda of the seminar. This was followed by the presentations by academic and practicing anthropologists on diverse themes.

Mr Suneel Kumar, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology (Figure 4), described what action anthropology is and how anthropologists conduct research and use anthropological knowledge to solve human problems. He also presented a brief history of the idea of action anthropology and how it has now turned into a valuable scientific enterprise in empowering communities to solve their problems.

Figure 1: Anthropologists, civil society representatives and the students

Figure 2: Professor Mukhtar Qazi, Chairman Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Sindh

Figure 4: Professor Suneel Kumar, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology
differentiated action anthropology from development interventions currently made by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are donor driven and pay less attention to the actual needs and problems of local communities.

Mr M. Sajjad Abro, Research Consultant and Practicing Anthropologist (Figure 3), presented his views on child marriage and a recently passed Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2013. Though he appreciated the bill, he argued it ignored causes and contexts of child marriages and how the enforcement of the Bill might bring unintended negative consequences for the poor families and young girls in Pakistan. He said that all social institutions are interconnected and we must see the practice of child marriage in a larger whole to understand it better and make proper plans to address the issue. He presented different but interconnected causes of child marriage and how this practice emerged as a human response to surrounding conditions. Instead of passing the Bill to prevent child marriages, he said, the state must first address the conditions which force parents to marry off their daughters at a young age.

Mr Ikramullah Maznani, a development professional and a practicing anthropologist, shared findings about disaster response after the 2010 super floods that affected 20 million people in Pakistan. He focused on one district (Dadu) and showed how disaster response by national and international humanitarian organisations badly damaged indigenous social structures, family relationships and cultural values. He said humanitarian agencies completely ignored indigenous knowledge regarding disaster response and a completely new form of knowledge was imposed on local communities. He also talked about conflicts among local communities which emerged after inadequate planning by intervening agencies.

Mr Lutaf Ali Mangrio, another development professional and a practising anthropologist, talked about ‘Sukh Initiative: A Community Based Intervention on Family Planning’, an initiative taken by his organisation Aman Foundation. This is the first intervention in the country that engages communities in family planning and the use of contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies. He said due to patriarchal social structures, women in rural and peri-urban areas are not allowed to make decisions about family planning and they have to obey their husbands. As an anthropologist, Mr Lutaf played a vital role in designing and planning the initiative. Though it is still in a pilot phase, it is expected to bring promising results.

Mr Rafiq Wassan, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Sindh, was the last presenter and he talked about ‘Exploring the Possibility of Critical Framework and Moral Stand by Anthropologists: Learning from the Field’. He criticised the development paradigm currently used by NGOs, and he emphasised using a holistic approach, as used by anthropologists, in solving social issues. He argued that a narrow and myopic approach used by organisations is not likely to help them to design effective social interventions.

After the round of presentations, representatives from civil society organisations were invited to comment on presentations and provide their feedback. Mr Razaq Umrani, District Manager, Health and Nutrition Soci-
Ms Meena Shaikh from AMRDO thanked *Anthropology in Action* and the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology for organising this event. She said development is impossible without empowering local communities and this cannot be achieved without engaging anthropologists and other social scientists to conduct research and provide their suggestions based on peoples’ views.

Ms Zahida Rehman Jatt, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, summarised the presentations and concluded the seminar. Mr Muhbat Shah extended a vote of thanks to all the participants and presenters at the seminar.

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