

Assessment of Socio-Economic Impacts of the Border Markets of Sero on Development of Surrounding Rural Areas

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Received: 24/4/2014 Accepted: 13/6/2015

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Development projects and trade plans in Iran and many developing countries have been criticized for their detrimental effects on various aspects, and sustainability at large. Accordingly, there is a widespread consensus about the importance of impact assessment of these plans on rural areas. Then, in line with the triple bottom line approach from sustainable development, the impact assessment is of particular importance in considering the sustainability of development projects and plans. Hence, establishment of Border Markets are one of these plans that the government has implemented to develop regions specially border areas in Iran. The basic goals ratified by these border markets are: to raise the socioeconomic standard of living of local people, to create permanent legal jobs, to reduce smuggling, and finally to provide legal sources of revenue for them. It seems that the common border markets of Iran which have been established to improve the welfare and income of local people have not been so much successful in attainment of their goals. Unemployment, smuggling, and illegal trades in border towns are still serious problems for people and government authorities. The Sero Border Market is a plan to develop border region especially rural areas of Somae-Brasou County. Somae-Brasou is located in the west part of West Azerbaijan Province, at a distance of 45 km from Urmia, the capital city of the province. It neighbors Turkey. The Sero Border Market as a great development plan in the West Azarbaijan province was started in 1991 in a high potential region. Establishment of the market potentially caused many social, economic and environmental changes in surrounding rural areas. Therefore, the objects of this study were:

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- To screen the impacts of Sero Border Market on development of surrounding rural areas;
- To scope the impacts of Sero Border Market on development of surrounding rural areas; and
- To model the range and levels of Sero Border Market's impacts.

The study will make certain suggestions to raise local people's income resources, to increase exports and therefore to raise foreign exchange revenues, to develop business knowledge of local people, and finally make some practical and useful suggestions to correct and improve the performance of common border markets.

Methodology

The study has discovery quantitative research methodology. The research method is also descriptive-analytical in the form of comparative approach. The comparative design is an accepted research technique for exploring the impacts that cannot be manipulated experimentally. Statistic population of the study is the rural people who lived in the villages around the market. For this purpose, the villages were categorized in three group distance of three, six, and nine kilometers from the market with the aid of Arc-GIS software. Fifteen villages are investigated in the study. Six villages from the first, six from the second, and three from the third layer were selected and investigated. The sample size of the rural people was determined by using the sampling size table given by Patten. The final samples included were 204 heads of households from the villages with the market. Accordingly, 40 % of rural people in each village participated in this study. Face-to-face interviews were used to collect data with the aid of questionnaire containing open and closed questions. For this purpose, a complete list of the items regarding impacts was developed.

Results and Discussions

The impact items were categorized in 10 impact criteria by a panel of experts. They include demographic characteristics, structure, perceived wellbeing, social capital, social participation, social structure development, quality of life, agriculture, and economic conditions, conservation of community resources, and living pattern and model. Due to determining the reliability of the questionnaire, internal contingency by Cronbach's Alpha value was implemented. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (0.66 to 0.84) confirmed the questionnaire. All statistical analysis was performed using SPSS statistical package (version 19 for widows), which consisted of reliability measures, ANOVA test, and path analysis. A significance level of 0.05 was used to establish statistical significance.

Conclusion

The results of this research showed that the market has declined some criteria such as social welfare, rural economy, handicraft development, social participation, and quality of life. Meanwhile, the great declining was in the rural people's economic

criteria. On the other hands, social welfare, rural economy, development of handicraft, social participation, and quality of life were declined in the Sero Border Market. The market has also had an impact only on the villages at a distance of six kilometers. Furthermore, results of a path analysis suggested that the age, income and attitude toward the market were the most important factors explaining evaluation towards impacts of border market of Sero.

Keywords: Border market, Industrialization, Rural development, Socioeconomic impact, Sero.

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