

Community Driven Development (CDD)

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan

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I am most grateful to the Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) Azmat Isa for inviting me to speak before this distinguished gathering. As I have only ten minutes, I have written my thoughts.

I first heard of what is being called CDD in 1959, as a young field officer in the then East Pakistan, from a visionary Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK). He called it Social Organisation and unashamedly admitted he had copied it from Raiffeissen, the mayor of a small principality in Germany in 1849 and from the literature he read how Raiffeissen's principles of subsistence holders development were implemented with success in Japan, Taiwan's Joint Commission for Relief and Reconstruction, Kibbutz of Israel and others. He firmly believed that Raiffeissen's three principles, organisation, capital generation through savings and human skills development were as precise for subsistence holders development as the law of gravity. He advocated that those development projects or programmes formulated defying these principles, were like building crooked walls and would not succeed and lamented that most of the third world country governments excelled in building crooked walls.

He demonstrated the efficacy of these principles by implementing the Comilla Project which inspired South Korean's Samaul Undong programme. The events of 1971 and emergence of Bangladesh is history and I need not dilate on it.

It fell to my lot in 1982, thanks to His Highness the Aga Khan, to resurrect the principles of development I had learnt from Akhter Hameed Khan in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral, an 85,000 sq. kms area with a million population living in the most inhospitable and harshest terrain of the world. Luckily Akhter Hameed Khan advised me over 12 years I implemented the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and wrote 12 reports which to me were like a text book of rural development.

There is a saying in Urdu if the peacock dances in the jungle, who saw it? Fortunately for me in 1987, the World Bank Operations Evaluation Division came to assess AKRSP and I admire the wisdom and perception of the team which came. One of their observations were and I quote “The first four years of AKRSP are missed four years of all rural development projects where a blue print approach has taken precedence over a process approach”. The OED had done evaluation of over 250 such projects of the Bank. I was mighty pleased. There was more in store for me. At the second assessment of AKRSP, the World Bank OED concluded that the income of the people of the area where AKRSP operated, had more than doubled in ten years in real terms. This gave AKRSP global recognition.

In 1992, the President of Philippines conferred on me the Magsaysay Award which attracted the attention of Mr. Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan. He desired replication of AKRSP countrywide after he had consulted his Finance Minister Mr. Sartaj Aziz, who strongly supported the PM’s idea. Sartaj had personally visited AKRSP and greatly encouraged me and had remained steadfast supporter of the AKRSP approach. Because of the decision of replication, the setting up of National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) to do it happened. The government was removed a few months later. NRSP survived because Sartaj gave us an endowment of Rs. 500 million and promised similar instalments every six months for next 5-7 years. A ten billion rupee proposal was approved by the Inter Provincial Coordination Committee meeting called by the Prime Minister.

The replication of AKRSP in Pakistan remains a dream unfulfilled but in 1994, UNDP took me to South Asia to disseminate lessons learnt at AKRSP. Of all the countries, India listened to me and in 1999 when Meiki Nishimizu, Vice President of the World Bank accepted my invitation to visit Andhra Pradesh and after the visit declared to the State Government officials that she had seen “UNDP’s Miracle” and the Bank will be willing to support, if the State Government wished to take the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP), lessons statewide. A Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) stepped into the shoes of SAPAP, taking all the staff of SAPAP and 11 million rural households have now been organized. My greatest reward was when India’s Minister of Rural Development Mr. Jairam Ramesh wrote:

“ Shoaib Sultan Khan pioneered the concept through his landmark Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Pakistan

With the support of UNDP, he introduced the concept of poverty reduction through community organisations through South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) in India and other South Asian Countries. The Pilot initiative of SAAP led to a full-fledged programme based on the principles of development through community organisation under the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in Andhra Pradesh with the support of World Bank. The project has seen the journey of over ten million organized households from despair to hope, from diffidence to confidence, from subjugation to empowerment in last decade. The spirit of community empowerment has continued to thrive in India since then. At the behest of Rahul Gandhi (parliamentarian from Amethi), he made a visit to the Rajiv Gandhi Mahila Vikas Pariyojana (RGMVP) villages in Uttar Pradesh and helped the project to reformulate its vision. RGMVP founded on the same set of core values and beliefs and thus has much to benefit from Shoaib Khan’s vision and efforts.”

The World Bank christened social organisation as Community Driven Development and the Seed Capital in SAPAP became Community Investment Fund (CIF) in SERP.

In Pakistan when Sartaj again came into government in 1998, the first thing he did was to tell me that the replication of AKRSP cannot be left to the whims of governments in power and fully supported the idea of setting up of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

I was happy to get a message from Meiko to come to Washington DC to convince her sector managers about the feasibility and need for such a fund in Pakistan. I spent two days in DC holding workshops with Bank staff advocating and convincing them about the effectiveness of CDD. Azmat Isa fully supported me and PPAF was born. Unfortunately, Sartaj’s government again became a victim of circumstances and he left in 1999 soon after PPAF came into existence but he ensured that it was chaired and managed by the best people for the job in the country. I mean Chairman Mr. Hussain Dawood and former CEO of PPAF Mr. Kamal Hyat.

Whatever replication of CDD has taken place in Pakistan, it has been mainly due to PPAF. The Rural Support Programmes could never have reached where they are today without PPAF support and specifically John Wall’s support who gave PPAF 75 million dollars for Social Mobilisation. Mr. Hussain Dawood gave a lease of life to

Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) when I took him to see what they were doing.

I have high hopes from Azmat Isa and I am confident he would do his best to make PPAF adhere to AHK's conceptual package. That package should not be diluted. The core requirement of CDD of fostering financially viable institutions of the people should first be achieved. The community investment fund (CIF) has a track record of helping millions and millions of poor in India and Pakistan. Let us benefit from it and not modify it. There is an English saying if something is working, don't fix it.

Last month, I went to Bahawalpur where PPAF had supported NRSP to do Social Mobilisation in 2009. NRSP has now mobilized 350,000 women in adjoining two districts and when in one of the Union Councils, I asked Kulsoom Bibi, the volunteer general secretary of the Local Support Organisation, why she was doing all this without any monetary reward, she gave me an answer in Saraiki which exactly said what Tolstoy had said hundreds of years ago "the only certain happiness in life is when you live for others".

PPAF has done remarkably well in setting up a credible and financially viable and sustainable poverty alleviation fund. It has also been successful in building up the capacity and financial viability of a substantial number of its Partner Organisations. However, these two objectives were only a means to the attainment of PPAF's main objective of poverty reduction in Pakistan. In rural Pakistan alone, there are 18 million households and according to the Poverty Score Card commissioned by Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and mainly done by Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) through its partners, 48% households approximately are below the poverty line in the region of 8 to 9 million households.

In the last General Body meeting of PPAF, I was greatly encouraged at Chairman Hussain Dawood's resolve that PPAF should now focus all its resources and attention to the attainment of a poverty free Pakistan. If we look at over three decades experience of rural poverty reduction in Pakistan, this objective is achievable at a modest cost of Rs. 30 million per Union Council over a period of 5 years. There are 5470 Rural Union Councils including FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK. The poor households will be enabled an earning of Rs. 2,000 to 3,000 per month doing away

with the need of BISP grant of Rs. 1,000-,1200, which has spent Rs. 166 billion during the last regime. I am confident Chairman Hussain Dawood, CEO Azmat Isa and the dedicated team of professionals and staff in PPAF will live up to PPAF's main objective. I hope the World Bank, as it did in India under Rachid Benmessaoud, would help PPAF in the attainment of this noble goal.

The best compliment I ever got, was from Sartaj Aziz. When my biographer, an Australian Noel Cossins asked Sartaj why the miracle of AKRSP did not spread like wildfire throughout the entire country? His reply and I quote "On this one last point Sartaj Aziz is adamant. The failure is not Shoaib's, it is the failure of the nation State of Pakistan to truly serve its people".

Thank you.