

Note for Record
November 7-9, 2014

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
November 16, 2014

Subject: AKRSP SHOWS THE WAY FORWARD

In December 1982 when I had visited Karimabad Hunza to initiate the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), there was no place to spend the night except a dilapidated Berber Inn, where I shared a room with a Local Government Department official, who had accompanied us. Mercifully he had brought a kerosene heater otherwise I would have frozen solid at the bare Inn perched at a height of 8,000 feet. I was pleasantly surprised when one of the persons I met identified himself as owner of the Inn and remembered my staying there.

In November 2014 Karimabad has countless hotels (including five star), motels and inns and shops to attract the tourists but the centerpiece of our visit (I was accompanying Mr. Benoist Bazin, European Union's Head of Section, Rural Development & Economic Cooperation and Ms Roshan Ara from his office) was Baltit Rural Support Organisation (BRSO). In an articulate presentation, Nur Khan the Chairman of the Local Support Organisation (LSO) namely BRSO, described the activities and evolution of BRSO. Its roots were in what began as Village Organisations in 1983 and in due course of time resulted in 12 VOs and 12 Women Organisations (WOs) comprising 1185 households, representing 95% of the population of the Karimabad Union Council (UC). After first 10 years of AKRSP when VOs/WOs had matured and were to be evolved into higher formations of the institutions of the people, the thinking at AKF Geneva started changing and outside experts were invited to show the way forward as if AKRSP had reached terra incognita. One of the academic experts came up with the conclusion that VOs/WOs have outlived their utility and till 2003 these institutions of the people were sadly neglected. The setting up of the First MicroFinance Bank further weakened the VOs/WOs when their activities in savings and credit were transferred from AKRSP to the Bank. The glue which was keeping VOs/WOs active, lost its strength.

However, in 2003 at the AKRSP Board meeting in Chitral, Chairman Waljis and the Directors endorsed the idea of reactivating VOs/WOs and federating these at the Union level into Local Support Organisations. General Manager Izhar Hunzai fully owned the decision. The approach

received tremendous boost when the idea was presented before His Highness the Aga Khan and he enthusiastically endorsed it in 2005.

On visit to BRSO, my heart elated beyond measure to see how the LSO had translated the vision of the institutions of the people into a remarkable vehicle of development. The one factor which gave the LSO its present shape was the formation of youth organisations (YOs) and giving them representation in LSO along with VO/WOs. The General Body of BRSO comprises:

- VOs	24	Current Chairman/Manager
- WOs	24	Current Chairperson/Manager
- YOs	12	Current Chairman/Manager
- Founding Members	42	Elders of VOs/WOs
- Civil Society	02	Usually Welfare Societies

The Board comprises 15 members elected by the General Body. The LSO has paid core professional staff comprising Manager, Accountant and one female Social Mobiliser. In addition project staff is recruited as per provision in the project document. The Chairman of the Board is assisted by volunteer Vice Chairman and General Secretary chosen by the Board from amongst themselves.

The most important and critical step BRSO took was to reactivate the savings and within a couple of years got it increased from Rs. 9 million to Rs. 13 million and initiated internal loaning. This was elixir for revival of VOs/WOs.

Interventions by BRSO

Major Interventions:

Community Mobilisation:

1. Arranged session on Participatory Development (PD). Social Mobilisation and Gender & Development (GaD) for VWO members;
2. Revitalized 1 VO and 2 dormant WOs named VWO Aminabad & WO Khurukushall Khan;
3. Formed 5 new Youth Organisations (YOs); and

4. Conducted 3 day transfer project workshop for young members of V/WOs on Participatory Development, Social Mobilisation record keeping & Gender and Development for VWO members.

Capacity Building:

(A): At Programme level

- i. Training of unemployed and school dropouts
- ii. 40 unemployed youth were trained in masonry
- iii. Four core farmers have trained in Tokyo Japan on organic fruit production
- iv. One person is getting training in Tokyo Japan on marketing
- v. Five VWO members have gotten training in Lahore, Islamabad, Chitral and Swat in fruit marketing
- vi. 25 progressive farmers have trained in apple picking, packing & marketing
- vii. 11 male and 29 female members of VWOs in domain of BRSO have trained in participatory development, social mobilisation, record keeping and gender and development.

(B): At Governance level

- i. One board member has gotten training in Project Planning
- ii. One board member has trained in advocacy and lobbying
- iii. One board member has trained in Tokyo Japan on community business
- iv. One board member is getting training in Tokyo Japan on business administration
- v. One board member has gotten training in social mobilisation

(C): At Staff level

- i. One management staff was trained in social mobilisation
- ii. Training of AFC's staff
- iii. Training of AFC's 10 staff members through Plan Pakistan
- iv. Financial Management

Institutional Development: Formed 5 new Youth Organisations (YOs)

Resource Mobilisation:

1. V/WOs Registration Fee

- ii. Members Registration Fee
- iii. V/WOs Monthly Fee
- iv. Members Monthly Fee
- v. BoDs donations
- vi. Local donations
- vii. Female Vocational Centre reg. Fee
- viii. Potato Seed Income
- ix. Loan Form Fee
- x. Loan Register Fee
- xi. YOs Registration Fee
- xii. Female Vocational Centre Fee
- xiii. Prizes for BRSO
- xiv. Bank's Profit
- xv. Commission from projects
- xvi. Commission from UBR campaign
- xvii. Management Support of AKRSP

Gender and Development:

- a) Trained 11 male and 29 female members of VWOs in domain of BRSO in participatory development, social mobilisation and gender & development/.
- b) Arranged one day session for Board of Directors (Bod)s on gender sensitization and gender equality

The details of the trainings being managed and implemented by the LSO under these major interventions are as follows:

Training/Capacity Building

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Title of Trainings</u>	<u>Training Institute</u>	<u>No. of Trainings</u>	<u>Duration (Days)</u>	Participants		
					<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.	Community Mobilisation	AKRSP	1	7	1	1	2
2.	Capacity Building	JICA	38	38	836	950	1786
3.	Institutional	BRSO	40	5	11	29	40

	Development						
4.	Resource Mobilisation	KADO	1	7	1	1	2
5.	Gender and Development	AKRSP	1	3	1	1	2
6.	Financial Management	AKRSP/ BRSO	2	8	3	0	3
7.	Record keeping	AKRSP	2	6	23	41	64
8.	Entrepreneurship Development	AKRSP	1	10	2	23	25
9.	Capacity building Of entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan	AKRSP	1	10	10	15	25

PROJECTS

Projects outsourced by AKRSP (EELY, Infrastructure etc.)

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Project Donor</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Project Cost</u>
1.	CARITAS	Irrigation channels	Rs. 7.2 million
2.	RHIA	Adolescents Early Youth Development Programme	Rs. 1.2 million
3.	EELY	Entrepreneurship development	Rs. 0.865 million
4.	EELY	Young Community Leadership Development	Rs. 0.3 million
5.	EELY	Management Support Fund	Rs. 0.72 million
6.	ASF	Agribusiness Support Fund	Rs. 1.5 million
7.	Tourism Development	Silk Route Festival	Rs. 0.5 million
8.	STAR FARM PAKISTAN	Capacity building of Entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan	Rs. 0.1265 million
9.	UBR	Awareness & registration	Rs. 0.0013 million

LINKAGES DEVELOPED:

Linkages with other organisations

<u>S. No.</u>	<u>Name of Institutions linked</u>	<u>Activities</u>
1.	HImT ILDP	Development of 10 years Strategic Plan
2.	USAID	Micro hydel power (proposal submitted)
3.	USAID	Agribusiness Support Fund
4.	USAID	Capacity building of entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan
5.	JICA	The project for the promotion of Value Added Fruit Products in Gilgit-Baltistan Farmer Field School
6.	DOA HUNZA-NAGAR	Demo Plot of Tomato
7.	PARMA CULTURE	Eco friendly agriculture technology
8.	UN-HABITAT	Seminar on Disaster Risk Reduction
9.	SIHAT FOUNDATION	Free medical camp
10.	KIU	Session on pest disease & preventive measures
11.	NARC	Pilot project on pulses cultivation
12.	MINISTRY OF TOURISM	Silk Route festival
13.	STAR FARM/METRO	Capacity building of entrepreneurs in Gilgit-Baltistan

The other places I visited during the Gilgit-Chitral visit included interactions with Shinaki Area Development Organisation (SADO) LSO and Karimabad Area Development Organisation (KADO) LSO in Chitral. SADO had 32 V/WOs with 1229 organised households and an accumulated savings of Rs. 15 million. Their Chairman Sher Alam gave a comprehensive presentation and the new initiatives the LSO had undertaken in creating Health and Emergency endowments for the benefit of all the members especially the not so well off. In my visits to Hunza while driving by Hindi (now called Nasirabad), we often used to stop to collect garnets from a particular place by the roadside. The LSO has started mining the garnets for which China is a ready market. Nearly 60% of the households in rotation are engaged in the activity regulated by LSO fetching handsome income from the miners and commission for the LSO. The LSO has also engaged in many activities like BRISO.

We also paid a visit to Sumyar in Nagar where with EU support, the LSO is mining Aquamarine. I remember how on my first visit to the VO, they had shown me a two-kg rock with aquamarine stuck to it. It was now a very profitable activity. Helped by Rupali Foundation and funding from EU, VO members got trained in mining, cutting and polishing the gems. To see Nagar girls, who had been trained doing these activities, was indeed incredible. Currently most of the profits are going to the miners, the LSO should levy a commission for the facilitation it is offering to the miners, so that the non-miner members of the VO also have a share in the mining income as has been done by SADO in case of garnets.

The KADO in Chitral with 3123 households belongs to 182 VOs/WOs, 30 YOs and 15 Civil Society Organisations covering two Union Councils with 97% households organized. 40% of the LSO BoD members are women and there are 8 professional staff with a strong network of volunteers and activists. The mission, goals, core values, institutional infrastructure and main areas of interventions are as of other LSOs with emphasis on Stone Project for Youth. The LSO has increased savings from 19 to 30 million rupees. This income from internal resources is about Rs. 6 million from community contribution, micro credit, vehicle operation and social enterprise.

KADO's Trichmir Stone Creations, with funding from EU, is a leading enterprise system specializing in a range of stone craft products. The objective is to achieve sales of Rs. 50 million by the year 2020 and to engage 500 male and female stone craft artisans. They have explored a range of markets both national and international for their products. In addition, KADO has also embarked on a micro hydro project to supply electricity to the whole valley. KADO Chairman Israruddin, son of an old VO Chairman is full of enthusiasm and the moving spirit behind the way forward initiatives.

Benoist was greatly impressed by LSO's economic activities with own resources. He advised this was the way forward for next generation LSO by harnessing capacity of the communities to become self-sufficient because self-sufficiency places them in a better position to influence and engage with government, as 30% of the ADP resources Government of KP is committed to channel through the grassroots organisations. He clarified that in the eyes of EU, the grassroots institutions (VOs/LSOs) belong to the communities and not to an RSP or NGO.

Another first we saw in Chitral, encouraged by AKRSP, was formation of a district level organisation by 17 LSOs called Chitral Communities Development Network (CCDN), out of 24 Union Councils. Beginning in 1983 with VOs and LSOs in 2005, the CCDN was formed in 2011. This clearly brings out the lesson nothing should be imposed from above, the evolution of

the institutions of the people should evolve by itself except facilitation and catalytic input by the Support Organisation to help the process. The CCDN represents 17 LSOs, 823 VO, 676 WO, 221 CSOs comprising 35,270 households with Rs. 100 million savings.

In the last five years, the LSOs have implemented projects worth Rs. 600 million with 20,880 beneficiary households. They received support from AKRSP, CIADP, AKCSP, CESVI, IC, USAID, Japan Embassy, RSPN, FOCUS, PPAF, SAP and RI. In addition through SRSP implemented, PEACE project, EU provided substantial funding and EU also provided through AKRSP support for exploitation of gems and stone cutting projects.

CCDN urged its involvement in PEACE projects as the current requirements of working through contractor is inhibiting SRSP from fully and directly involving the CCDN in the implementation of PEACE programme. Benoist promised to look into the matter.

The CCDN has formed a Public-Private Partnership at district level and got a unanimous resolution passed by the District Government acknowledging CCDN as an implementing partner and CCDN signed a joint declaration with KP government accordingly. CCDN engages in cultural and social activities, on joint tree plantation campaign yearly and participation in district level forums. CCDN is acting as a conduit between government and LSOs. It encourages participatory governance and planning.

CCDN has played an active role in mainstreaming peace and social harmony, as a result Chitral has remained immune to Taliban incursions despite surrounded by militancy all around. CCDN has also taken many youth development initiatives. For its organizational sustainability, CCDN depends on member's regular contributions and internal and external resource mobilisation besides local philanthropy.

Despite many challenges like emerging needs and new level of expectations, limited coordination and competing interests of development agencies and many others, CCDN has found itself a strong platform for promoting community voice, leveraging points for equitable development to serve women, vulnerable groups, youth and backward areas. CCDN is emerging as a strong body for building consensus around social reform and peace building and being seen as neutral and acceptable to all local interests.

I am grateful to GM AKRSP Malik inviting me to join the EU team, who were already in Gilgit and to Benoist for welcoming me so warmly. It was great pleasure for me meeting AKRSP team

led by Amin Baig and Gilgit Region by Jamil Hisamuddin and Chitral by Sardar Ayub. They are all doing a splendid job and Malik should feel proud of them. For me it was a voyage of discovery and what I discovered taught me a lot and pleased me abundantly.