

Note for Record
July 9, 2014

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
July 11, 2014

Subject: **Meeting with Federal Minister Lt. Gen. ® Abdul Qadir Baloch.**

CEO BRSP Nadir Gul had arranged this meeting, as the Minister had expressed an interest in implementation of UC Plan in the five districts around his home district in Baluchistan, namely Washak, Kharan, Nushki, Chagai and Panjgor. The names of the districts rang a bell in my mind taking me back to 1957 and 1962 when I crossed through some of these districts on my overland journey from England to Pakistan. I had noticed lot of infrastructure development in Iran between these periods but hardly any in Pakistan. In 1974 I travelled via Mashhad from Tehran instead of Zahidan as the highway leading to Peshawar from Afghanistan had been constructed. Iran had transformed itself during this period and in 1997 when UNDP took me to Iran and also to Zahidan, I could not believe the development I saw there. A sleepy dusty town had been converted in a gleaming city. I wonder what transformation has taken place in the districts I crossed through in 1962 in Baluchistan.

General Qadir met us in his office in Block 'S' of the Pakistan Secretariat. I gave a resume of the 61 years of my working life. How I met Akhter Hameed Khan in 1959 and what I learnt from him and practiced it initially in Daudzai later in AKRSP and SAPAP and what transformation it brought to the economic and social status of millions of households especially in India. The main factor being the ownership of the programme by the State and Union governments.

I explained the profile of Baluchistan with the help of detailed UC Plan and specifically the situation in the five districts he was interested in comprising 51 Union Councils and 127,519 households. I underscored the importance of

reaching each and every extremely poor, chronically poor and poor household besides another 20% above the poverty line to prevent them from falling in the poverty trap. How this is to be done is directly connected with core interventions in the UC Plan namely fostering institutions of the people, community investment fund with a grant element for the extremely poor, vocational training for gainful employment and social protection through health insurance. In addition for the entire community comprising 2406 households, on an average, per Union Council there is provision for agriculture and livestock support besides funds for critical infrastructure.

The General listened to me with great interest and concentration and fully endorsed the UC Plan approach and agreed that no government department or local council is capable for fostering institutions of the people. He also agreed with the CIF concept and observed that many people come to him for a lump sum grant money support to enable them to earn a respectable livelihood instead of paltry sums of money every month which is mostly utilized in consumption.

BRSP had prepared a proposal for the five districts and Nadir Gul presented it costing Rs. 1.5 billion over 5 years. On Minister's query how much of this Donors can contribute, I cited the case of Sindh where on provincial government's promise of taking of 2/3 of the districts European Union has offered Rs. 8 billion to take up the remaining 8 districts. I conveyed to the General that the donors maintain that they are not a substitute to the government, they can only support what government is willing to do. Baluchistan being underdeveloped, Donors might take a more lenient view in funding UC Plan but government must first come up with adequate funds to show their commitment to the proposal.

The General said he would like me to go with him to the Prime Minister. I said I would be very happy to do so and also told him how Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved countrywide replication of AKRSP in 1992 and NRSP was established. Unfortunately with the change in government, it was abandoned. In my meeting

with the Prime Minister a couple of months ago, I did reminded him of the unfinished agenda and he very kindly listened to me with great interest but at the end when he called his Principal Secretary (in 1992 he had called Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz), the latter opined that BISP is the best way to poverty reduction. I told the General that even after five years with Rs. 165 billion disbursement of grant money, the same households are still recipients of BISP. BISP is only a relief programme it will not pull households out of poverty. Whereas CIF in case of two districts of Sindh Shikarpur and Kashmore-Kandhkot, where UC Plan was implemented since 2009 only for three years, according to SDPI Impact Assessment, 55% of the households from the bottom rung of poverty score card had risen above the poverty line.

I explained to the General that UC Plan is the most effective way. Again in Sindh the vocational training component under which 32,000 youth boys and girls were trained according to IBA Tracer Study, 91% of the unemployed were now earning from Rs. 2,000 to 8,000 per month. The Social Protection measure through health insurance saved hundreds of families from destitution due to hospitalization cover.

I submitted to the General that whomever he approaches for resources for UC Plan, it should be for entire districts. He should not accept resources for a few UCs in each district.

The General asked Nadir to give district wise proposals also besides the proposal for all the five districts.

We took leave of the General. He came out of his office see us off. I was greatly impressed by the humility, sincerity and understanding of whatever I presented to him. I am most grateful to Nadir for introducing me to General Abdul Qadir – a through gentleman who sincerely wants to do something for the poor of Baluchistan and more importantly understands how it can be done.