

Note for Record
September 8-12, 2015

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
September 15, 2015

Subject: **First Harvest of Social Mobilisation**

Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK) always used to emphasize the essentials of good governance for a welfare State, the presence of three Pillars namely, Administrative, Political and Socio-economic or Social. His lament was that most of the third world governments stop at Administrative and Political Pillars and hardly give any attention to the third Pillar. The SAARC Independent South Asia Commission on Poverty Alleviation, set up by Heads of State in 1991, came up with an overarching recommendation, duly endorsed by SAARC Summit in 1993 that fostering Social Pillar through a process of Social Mobilisation, should be the centerpiece for all poverty reduction strategies of South Asian States.

The roots of this recommendation was embedded in Raiffeisen's principles of subsistence holders development enunciated in Germany in 1849, practiced by AHK in Comilla in early sixties, adopted by South Korea in Samaul Undong in early seventies and by many NGOs in South Asia on a smaller scale except AKRSP initiated by His Highness the Aga Khan and setting up of National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) in 1992 by Government of Pakistan. It was the NRSP initiative, as AKRSP was funded by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and SRSP by USAID, which convinced the Commission to recommend to the SAARC Summit an Agenda for Action, directing "Implementation Strategy and Institution Building by Governments of South Asia: Support financially and administratively the establishment of independent, non-governmental and national level support mechanisms to catalyse formation of organisations of the poor".

As usual, the governments accepted it but did nothing. In Pakistan also with the change in government even NRSP came to a standstill and SRSP due to Pressler Amendment was starved of resources. However, the World Bank convened a conference in US, immediately after the Commission's recommendation, endorsed by the SAARC Summit to discuss how donors could help the South Asian governments to implement the decision on Social Mobilisation, taken at the highest level by Heads of States and Governments. As a result UNDP launched the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) in August 1994 and asked me to be the Senior Adviser of the Programme.

In Pakistan ad hoc support kept the Social Mobilisation surviving. In 1995 WAPDA gave an endowment to set up Ghazi Brotha Development Programme (GBTI) and Chief Minister Punjab in 1998 provided endowment for establishing the Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP). It was only in 1999 that Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) was set up by the Government of Pakistan with World Bank support and a reliable source of funding became available for organizing communities but at a level which enabled mobilisation of only a small percentage of rural communities. However, in India, SAPAP had great success in convincing Government of the State of Andhra Pradesh to make all the resources needed to mobilise ultimately eleven million households, resulting in Government of India launching a National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), as part of twelfth Five Year Plan to reach 350 million rural poor through mobilizing 70 million households.

In 2000 Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) was set up by NRSP with funding from DFID and the support of AKRSP, SRSP, GBTI, BRSP, PRSP, TRDP and Sindh Graduate Association, later joined by Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), AJKRSP, FIDA and IRM. With the support of PPAF, donors and provincial governments and federal ministries, RSPs have now a presence in 123 districts/FATA/FRs through 362,791 community organisations with a membership of over 6 million households, federated into 1449 Local

Support Organisations (LSOs) at Union Council level. With the exception of Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral, none of the other RSPs could secure adequate resources to achieve saturation in Social Mobilisation of the level achieved by AKRSP. It is for this reason that out of a total potential forming 5584 LSOs, only about 26% have been formed.

Courtesy Chairperson Munawar Humayun and CEO Masoodul Mulk, a visit to Abbottabad, Haripur and Mansehra areas of SRSP was arranged for me which was joined by Programme Manager Usman Ghani and Institutions Specialist Jahan Ara besides the Chairperson.

Both Abbottabad and Mansehra Regions of SRSP have very small core staff. Of course, they keep on augmenting it with different type of project staff. But the Project Staff focuses primarily on achieving targets laid down by the respective donors and more often than not social mobilisation is only peripheral. Thanks to SRSP Management especially the CEO, that despite resource constraint, a core staff is being maintained in each Region. Abbottabad and Mansehra being in this situation for the last so many years, an impression had been, naturally, created that hardly any meaningful activity is taking place in these Regions. It was for this reason that I expressed a desire to the Chairperson to visit the area, which I had frequented umpteen times during Social Mobilisation in its hay days and in the wake of the earthquake.

We were in for a surprise when we saw what the Regions under the dynamic leadership of Zubair Anwar in Abbottabad and Shakeel Ahmed in Mansehra are doing and have achieved and plan to achieve. Our visit was in the wake of the recently held election to the Village Councils and indirectly to Tehsil and District Councils. The Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK) government has amended the Local Government Act replacing each erstwhile Union Council with 3 to 4 Village Councils (VCs) and allocating 30% of the provincial Annual Development Programme (ADP) to be directly given to VCs. This meant that each VC will have

an allocation of Rs. 50 to 70 lacs annually depending on the size of the Provincial ADP. This offers a grand opportunity for grassroots development by involving communities in decision making about development of their area.

In Abbottabad Region our group visited and interacted with nearly 33 LSO representatives at Bagh and Srikot in Abbottabad and Haripur districts. In Mansehra Region, we interacted with representatives of 16 LSOs of Mansehra district and staff of the Region comprising Kohistan, Shangla, Battagram and Mansehra Districts.

In Abbottabad Region, the election results were as follows:

- Total No. of organised LSOs	33
- Total No. of VCs in organised LSOs	132
- Total No. of Elected Members	1452
- LSO Members elected	527
- Total No. of CO/VO members elected in Non-LSO areas	397
- Total No. of Organised Communities Members Elected	924
- Total No. of Elected VC Members in the Region	3051

Thus the organised communities have captured over 30% seats in all the VCs of the Region with 96 members elected to District/Tehsil Councils including one District Nazim.

In Mansehra district in the 16 LSO areas, 235 members got elected to VCs out of a total of 580 seats, which is over 40%.

Describing the activities undertaken by Sangam Welfare Society, LSO of Bagh Valley Union Council in Abbottabad district (Arif Abbasi), the spectrum included

securing Rs. 10 million through MNA, 20 million through Deputy Speaker of the KP Assembly, restoring water supply scheme, accessing Right to Information (RTI) through District Monitoring Team, establishing Vocational Training Centre for women, benefiting 600 households through livestock development with the focus on education, employment, women empowerment and poverty reduction.

LSO Pasban (Fayyaz Abbasi) described efforts in accessing Ambassador's fund and LSO project to help 600 disabled, Reconciliation Forum of LSO settling 75% of disputes, averting divorce cases, getting women entitlement to land and alimony.

Babu Khushal of LSO Nur Sahu has been elected to the District Council and rose from CO/VO/LSO chairmanship. If he was given an option, he would rather resign from the District Council than leave the chairmanship of LSO. A great example of a genuine community resource person (CRP). Others who spoke included Arif Ali of Pasban LSO who secured 50% MPA's grant. Muhammad Ismail of Green Valley LSO who with Rs. 200,000 Community Investment Fund (CIF) revolved to Rs. 500,000 benefitting 76 women, Arshad of LSO Pattan spoke of poverty at household level and how he used CIF and also enabled eligible members to access Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Sardar Muhammad Khaleel of LSO spoke how his LSO secured 12.4 million rupees from local MNA/MPA for valley road; Kala Khan who formed his CO in 1997 and rose to LSO; Lal Khan spoke about the confidence instilled in them by SRSP and knowledge to improve forestry, horticulture, agriculture increasing productivity many times and Safdar Abbasi spoke of empowerment of Youth through CO/VO/LSO, reduction of factionalism and linkages with government departments with the result that government officers themselves come to LSOs instead of villagers going to them.

We also met women LSO, to which I had the rare privilege of being invited with the Chairperson SRSP Munawar Humayun. The LSO office bearers proudly

claimed 80% participation of women with 100% membership of poor household in partnership with men and how LSO has tried to solve health and water problems faced by women like BHU having no lady doctor, difficulty in getting birth certificates, girls education, teachers training in English language, home appliances training such as washing machine, mobile phones, electrical fittings, livestock and poultry etc. They claimed to have addressed all these problems and succeeded to a great extent. When I asked about beautician training, the younger giggled but the older ones were not amused.

We also met a Youth Group as part of a project launched by SRSP with funding from British Council. In accordance with the Right to Education of 5-16 years old Youth got 436 admitted in schools both boys and girls out of a total of 1000 out of school children. The Youth about 30 have been trained and are volunteers and monitoring progress of the Right to Education.

In Haripur district, we had a similar meeting with a group of representatives of LSOs at Pamyar Union Council where Muhammad Ilyas of LSO Sustainable Development Organisation (SDO) recounted the achievements of the SDO through a comprehensive and impressive presentation covering all fields of activities from forging linkages with government departments, international donors like RAHA, UNHCR, GTZ etc. NGOs besides SRSP and NRSP, self-help projects, social work, helping in funerals, marriages the poorest, human resource development, agricultural innovations like tunnel farming, health and hygiene, environment protection and future plans included BHU coverage of all villages, technical school through Alif Elan. LSO has mobilised 98% enrolment of boys and girls and solar power for tube wells is being explored.

As there is an adjoining large colony of Afghan refugees, the LSO through RAHA got a Vocational Centre at a cost of Rs. 3.2 million set up in the colony, a school through UNHCR also a link road, biogas plants etc., through USAID, UNICEF and other donor's assistance.

Asif Jah of Bir UC described the fostering of Social Pillar to complement the Administrative and Political Pillars and how his development work through SRSP association firstly got him the Chairmanship of Union Council and now he has been elected to District Council.

Tariq Mahmood of Hattar LSO described the measures taken to make LSO financially viable by levying contribution of Rs. 5 pm by members of COs and in addition creating an endowment of Rs. 1.5 million to meet monthly recurrent expenses of the LSO. Besides the many development activities which have been described earlier by other LSOs, Hattar LSO invited the elected MNA to discuss steps for the way forward. The LSO has also introduced a system to develop alternate leadership and introduced at least a gap after a four years terms of office bearers of LSO. Tariq Mahmood has also been to Malaysia on training twice on the basis of the work the LSO has done, he was selected and invited.

LSO representative Gul Zaman and Malik Rashid Zaman also spoke about the activities of their LSOs and the support they got from NGOs Sungi and Hadaf.

Shahnawaz of Bajeeda Union Council whose work when shown to Chairman and CEO PPAF and the then Finance Minister, later Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz resulted in a survival grant to SRSP from PPAF and a 70 million US Dollars grant for Social Mobilisation to PPAF in first decade of 21st century. Shahnawaz is as active as ever and has umpteen initiatives to his credit.

At Mansehra representatives of 16 LSOs had assembled to meet us. Gohar Rahman recounted how he formed a CO to solve the drinking water problem of the area by securing a scheme costing Rs. 10 million. There was no contractor, no corruption and the community managed the scheme from its start to completion and maintenance with technical and social organisation support from SRSP. He is a labourer and had gone to Islamabad to do daily wage labour. He

showed his hands bearing marks of hard labour. It was then that elections to VC were announced and members of his LSO approached him in Islamabad and persuaded him to stand for election and with God's grace, he is now an elected member of his VC. It was a most touching story for everyone and we admired the spirit of helping his community in Gohar Rahman.

Dr. Moeen Qureshi of LSO Chaman, now also elected as Chairman of the VC, emphasized the importance of institution building. With this empowerment the LSO has forged linkages with all government departments including the Assistant Commissioner. LSO is being represented in all government departmental committees and has also linkages with the local MNA and MPA for accessing funds from government. The LSO also has four paid professionals whose recurrent cost is met by LSO. The LSO presents an example of financial sustainability.

Nurul Islam of Ichrian UC LSO cited the Prophet's saying "Those people are better who help others". Through the LSO, the CO/VO have tried to live up to the Prophet's saying. The LSO has achieved full government officers participation including Police Station Baffa. Step by step, not in one jump, LSO has addressed each and every problem being faced by people. Despite a small village, the Youth representative to UC was elected from Nurul Islam's village. Ichrian LSO has also prepared a three year development plan of the UC with cost estimates.

Other LSO representatives, Sardar Haroon, Muhammad Farooq (now elected as Tehsil Nazim), Sardar Muhammad Rafiq also spoke about the activities of their LSO covering a spectrum of activities narrated by earlier LSO representatives.

Imtiaz Bibi and Sadaf Bibi, both elected to VC in their respective areas, spoke of the change brought about by organised groups as members of CO/VO/LSO in terms of women empowerment.

All the LSO representatives in Abbottabad and Mansehra Regions showed consensus on development work in VCs, should be done through LSOs and not contractors. I urged them to achieve this objective, each LSO should prepare LSO Community Infrastructure Plan with cost estimates etc., of each VC with the help of SRSP technical staff, before the flow of funds to each VC, as promised by KP government. This should be got approved by the respective VC, so that it has the endorsement and support of the Political Pillar.

In the meeting with the staff of the Mansehra Region, reviewing the status of the institutional development of the Social Pillar, it transpired that out of potential of organizing 145 LSOs, only 39 LSOs have been formed. A case in point was Kohistan where all 38 Union Councils were mobilised under PPAF supported Social Mobilisation Programme a few years back but with the phasing out of the programme and departure of most of the Social Organisers, the formation of LSOs was not pursued. The District Programme Manager assured that there is a large cadre of Community Resource Persons (CRPs) available in the UCs who could be mobilised to foster LSOs in all the UCs. Only what is needed are some resources for capacity building of the newly formed LSOs and refresher training for existing CO/VO/LSO activists. The Kohistan situation is more or less prevalent in all the Union Councils of both Mansehra and Abbottabad Regions. One can well imagine if SRSP had LSOs in every Union Council what the communities could have achieved at VC elections.

Lessons: The visit reinforced my conviction in the efficacy of the Social Pillar in empowering rural poor economically, socially and politically. Any politician, with a foresight, can reap a rich harvest if he or she fosters Social Pillar and wins over their support.

Abbottabad and Mansehra Regions have demonstrated how viable Social Pillar, comprising CO/VO/LSO, can be fostered. Like Swat where Zahid has demonstrated how CRPs pool can be generated, Zubair and Shakeel have done

trail blazing, with very few committed and dedicated core staff in the two Regions, showing how Social Pillar can be fostered. Their challenge is now how to commandeer the existing Pool of CRPs to cover all the Union Councils in the Region, so as to access the tremendous resources for the rural communities likely to be channeled through newly inducted VCs. I would be keenly looking forward to my next visit to the Regions to see this happening.