

**Note for Record**  
**(August 12-17, 2016)**

**By: Shoaib Sultan Khan**  
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Subject: AKRSP Revisited

Within three months of my taking over as General Manager (GM), Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), His Highness (HH) the Aga Khan visited Islamabad in 1983 and I was asked to come down from Gilgit to meet him at breakfast at the State Guest House. In the presence of the Chairman, AKRSP Board of Directors, who was the only other person present at breakfast, HH told me AKRSP is his programme and if I ever needed his help, I had his permission to come directly to him. Of course in twelve years of my association with AKRSP, I never felt the need to trouble HH. Everyone from GM, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) Geneva to AKF Pakistan gave me all the support AKRSP needed.

In 1994 when UNDP New York approached me to take lessons learnt at AKRSP as these had been recommended by Independent South Asia Commission for Poverty Alleviation and fully endorsed by SAARC Heads of State in their Dhaka Summit in 1993, I sought permission from HH to take over as Senior Adviser to UNDP's regional programme South Asia Poverty Alleviation (SAPAP). Courtesy Bill Spoelberg ( former GM AKF ), HH met me at his residence in Paris, near Notre Dam. As AKRSP was set up to double the income of the people of Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral (GBC) within ten years and in the process also to develop a replicable model of poverty reduction and according to World Bank evaluation of AKRSP, it had in real terms achieved the objective of doubling the income, I submitted to HH that there was an opportunity to test if AKRSP has developed a replicable model for the rest of the country and the South Asia region. HH gave his consent on condition that the UNDP will allocate ten percent of my time for

AKRSP. HH was keen that I should remain associated with AKRSP. UNDP readily agreed to the wishes of HH.

I was also very happy at this turn of events because with the elevation of the Director Special Programme, AKF Geneva, as GM he had no time to visit AKRSP which over the last ten years he used to do many times in a year and used to see the progress achieved by AKRSP personally. He was indeed the most critical supporter of AKRSP and contributed immensely in the progress of AKRSP. With his elevation, new people came in with their own ideas how AKRSP should be managed and felt that what Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK) was advising me to do, was simply more of the same and made the new GM AKF to write me a letter entitled "Terra Incognita". AHK had a very clear long term strategy as he used to maintain that the existing two pillars of State, namely Administrative and Political did not possess the capability to alleviate poverty because poverty was at the household level and unless a programme can reach and interact with each poor household and help in unleashing their potential, they will never rise above the level of subsistence. AHK advocated fostering of a third pillar which he called Socio-economic Pillar i.e. Social Pillar to empower and reach each poor household. AKRSP for ten years had done that and mobilised and organised 90% of the GBC households into Village Organisations. AHK advised to federate these village level organisations into a higher level and advised not to impose it from above but allow VOs to evolve, as these were going to be Institutions Of the People as against AKRSP which was an Institution For the People.

I thought my continued association with AKRSP, as desired by HH, may allow me to nudge AKRSP to the strategy AHK had been advocating. Unfortunately AKRSP drifted away from the basics, advised by foreign consultants and lack of commitment to the strategy in the AKRSP Management. It was only in 2003 when the Chairman AKRSP BoD in a meeting at Chitral endorsed the strategy and it was put up to HH who expressed great enthusiasm for the strategy. In

2005 the AKRSP management started picking up the pieces, as the emergence of the First Microfinance Bank in 2003, had taken away the glue of savings and credit which was keeping the Village Organisations together. Despite these setbacks, once AKRSP mobilised VOs to federate and provided some monetary support, federation of VOs at Union Council level as Local Support Organisation started emerging and many LSOs started coming into existence.

My association with SAPAP from 1994 to 2002 which is still continuing at the request of Indians, reinforced my conviction and belief in what AHK was advocating, the fostering of Social Pillar, to empower the poor. In 1996 I brought the Indians to AKRSP and once they saw what communities could do and what potential they had, they not only organised 11 million households in Andhra Pradesh but also federated them in 1100 Mandals (equivalent of Union Councils) and succeeded in achieving most of the resources meant for them, at the disposal of Administrative and Political Pillars for the Social Pillar. In addition because of VOs and Mandal Organisations credible savings and credit performance accessed 100 billion Indian rupees from commercial banks as the Andhra State Government gives the Social Pillar a 75% subsidy in payment of interest to commercial banks. In 2011 the Andhra example was adopted by the Indian Planning Commission and replication of Andhra was launched by including a programme entitled National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) at a capital outlay of US\$ 5.1 billion, included in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, according to the World Bank, the largest poverty reduction programme in the world, to which Bank has pledged a support of one billion dollars.

I was excited when the new GM AKRSP Muzaffaruddin invited me to visit Gilgit. As CEO AKDN Akhtar Iqbal also wanted to visit Gilgit and Chitral, we left on the helicopter on August 11 for Gilgit but because of inclement weather, the helicopter returned from Margalla Hills. However, next day we made it to Chitral where Akhter had an AKDN coordination meeting, while I met some of the LSO representatives and got a briefing by Darjat on the micro hydels under

implementation by AKRSP with European Union funding. AKRSP has initiated work on 52 hydels out of 55 aimed at generating 6.3 megawatts of electricity. Of them 19 are below 75 KV being managed by the communities.

In my discussion with the LSOs Network which comprises 16 LSos out of 22 LSOs formed in Chitral. 2 UCs have not federated VOs into LSO as yet. The LSOs Network Chairman regretted the proliferation of organisations at village level because every donor requires formation of a separate organisation for their project. This has greatly undermined the viability of the VOs and the capacity of the Network to forge linkages of LSO with Administrative and Political Pillars. He strongly advocated the revitalization VOs for revival of LSOs and strengthening of the District Network. He regretted even desirable coordination between AKRSP and SRSP in some places did not exist. Both the RGMs of AKRSP and SRSP Sardar Ayub and Tariq promised to have monthly meeting to resolve issues and revitalize VOs who can negotiate with other donors to form sub-groups of VO to fulfill the donor requirements.

Akhtar, after his meeting, joined us to proceed to Gilgit by the helicopter and dropped us on the way at Taos in Yasin valley. I could not believe my eyes Taos which was a small village with few houses, looked like a small town a number of buildings and shops. We were met by some members of the Taos LSO who requested me to meet them. Although it was not in my programme, we promised to stopover on our way back from Handur, the far end of the Yasin valley just near the last village of Darkut, where the famous British explorer was got murdered by the Maharaja of Kashmir in end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When I had brought HH to Barkulti in 1987, most of the area was barren, now I saw nothing but trees, fruit and forest all through the drive. The valley had become green instead of the desolate look it used to give.

We met the members of VOs which used to be part of 47 men groups and 15 women groups comprising 1319 hh. In 2003 when AKRSP issued a circular, on formation of the First Microfinance Bank, that it was no more responsible for VO savings, the VOs withdrew their savings and became dormant. In 2010 when floods came the VOs got revived to meet the challenge and also resulted in formation of LSO registered in 2012 with 42 VOs and savings of Rs. 1.8 million.

I spoke about their tremendous achievements through their organisations and the need to strengthen them. Muzaffar exhorted the women to get 100% organised considering educated girls amongst them who can easily take care of VO documents for which women had to depend on men. He promised full AKRSP support to women organisations. Hazir Shah, the driving force of VO Barkulti described the development in agriculture, horticulture and forestry and their adoption of commercial agriculture and the potential they see in livestock development, mining of jewels and gems and tourism. I urged them to strengthen their institutions of VOs and LSOs to access resources from the Administrative and Political Pillars. I also gave them the example of the cow and her calf when the calf grows up and wants milk, the mother cow kicks it away. AKRSP was a cow and they were the calves now they are grown up and learn to strengthen their organisations to access services and supplies which at the nascent stage, they got from AKRSP.

On my way back when we stopped at Taos and met members of the LSO, called Al-Karim Development Organisation, in their own building, formed by 1702 hh comprising 15 male and 22 women organisations with Rs. 8 million savings. Their story was totally different from the earlier visit. With support of LG&RD, the LSO office had been constructed. The LSO has linked with government departments like Agriculture, Forestry, Health and Education and had undertaken projects in the field of youth development through vocational training.

The LSO has paid professional staff and has generated resources from profits of Community Investment Fund (CIF) of Rs. 1.8 million initiated with Rs one million grant from RSPN, which is a revolving fund, membership fee from VOs, income from Women Skill Development Centre and commissions. The LSO has undertaken implementation of 35 projects outsourced to it by AKRSP and forged linkages with 23 organisations including government department, international donors, political leaders and AKDN institutions. LSO Taos was indeed a magnificent example of Social Pillar forging linkages with Administrative and Political Pillars. AKRSP should use it as the exposure and training centre for other LSOs.

From Taos we drove to Terru. I was amazed at the metaled road and remembered my journey on foot from Barkulti to Yasin in the dark when a landslide before Barkulti stranded our jeep on the other side. It was a ten mile walk and I wondered what am I doing here at ripe age of over 51 years. The journey to Yasin Valley from Gilgit which used to take over 8 hours, is now done in 3 hours.

We spent the night at Khalti Lake in the newly constructed PTDC motel. Khalti Lake was formed while I was GM AKRSP when the Ghizar river was blocked by a landslide devouring lands of people and forming a lake. In the morning we drove upto Terru. Terru was made famous by visit of HH to the irrigation channel under construction high up the hill. When HH desired to climb up and looked down, none of his members in the entourage who were mostly from Karachi tried to climb but gave up. On reaching the top, he chuckled and pointed to me to look down. The photograph at the channel of HH became the cover of my book on AKRSP printed by Oxford University Press in 2010

The Terru LSO called the Shandur Local Support Organisation, comprises 35 VOs/WOs representing 985 hh out 1030 of UC Terru, estimated at an altitude of

10020 feet. It has a savings of Rs. 9.5 million. The LSO has two paid professionals.

The LSO has forged linkages with LG&RD (who helped in construction of Community Hall and LSO Office), Forest Department (forest trees), Tourism Department (pony track to Handurap Valley), Snow Leopard (Yak Vaccination) Hasho Foundation (cultural shows), Central Asia Institute (Primary and High School), USAID (Potato Seed), Jubilee Life (Health Insurance), Focus Humanitarian (Stock Pile) and WWF (Tourism Information Centre).

Presentations were made on behalf of LSO by the President assisted by the Manager followed by a presentation on Village Organisation Gulakhmoli Bala by Amina of Women Organisation. They were organised in 1987 with all 41 hh comprising 47 members. Hold their meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month and their activities include vegetable growing, fruit processing, vocational training, linkages with Focus and AK Health Centre. Their main aim is economic empowerment by making full use of their natural resources. Gulakhmoli Payeen with 50 hh has similar activities as VO of Bala. They have undertaken projects encompassing drinking water, education, irrigation, pasture development, flood control, peace maintenance and youth sessions. I was delighted to meet Ibrahim the activist who nurtured the Terru VO since its inception.

There was animated discussion on financial sustainability of LSO, amounting to Rs. 45,000 per month. Currently it was being met by ad hoc measures. On my suggestion if the VO members consider LSO as their own institution with the distinguishing feature that it has roots in each household, unlike any other society, organisation or NGO, shouldn't they contribute toward LSO sustainability, which amounts to Rs. 10 per member per month or lump sum Rs. 500 annually. Everyone agreed except one bearded member, who I was told was a good activist and a teacher. However, in being hopeless minority, the majority agreed to consider the proposal.

Muzaffar also conveyed Princess Zahra's wishes that AKRSP should concentrate more on women and he challenged the women to take more active part and promised full AKRSP support. I reinforced that if I have my way now I will only work with women, as I did in India and millions of households got organised and similar phenomenon happened in Sindh when the Chief Minister in 2009 gave resources to undertake AKRSP type work in Shikarpur and Kashmore districts. Within three years over 200,000 households got organised and are now financially viable COs, VO's and LSOs despite the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme phasing out in 2013.

From Terru, we drove to Hatoon on a beautiful tarmac road except the last few miles when we had to leave the road to reach LSO Sangam of Hatoon Bubar Union Council. Throughout my travel from Taos to Terru to Hatoon, the greenery and plantation of millions and millions of trees makes ones heart jump with joy. Many years ago when I was GM, Prince Ameen on a visit confided to me that he had never seen so many trees in Northern Areas on his earlier visits. I can well imagine what impression he will carry if he now visits the area including Nagar and Baltistan.

Sangam LSO formed in 2006 comprises 23 VO's, 26 WO's and also 4 Civil Society Organisations (CSO) with a total membership of 2680 representing 2132 households. The VO/WO savings amounts to Rs. 8.3 million. The LSO has a General Body of 30 men, 32 women and 5 CSO representatives with a Board of Directors 12 male and 3 female. LSO has two paid professional staff. The LSO has done capacity building of over 264 male and 219 females in areas covering apricot processing, honey bee, record keeping, skills training, marketing, village development training, financial management, agricultural training, leadership training and youth development programme. LSO also undertook Awareness Programmes in areas covering drugs, youth participation in LSO, greenwood and career counselling.

In the field of linkages with AKRSP/PPAF outsourced projects worth Rs. 17 million to the LSO; others included Hasho Foundation, USAID, Jubilee Life Insurance, Rupani Foundation (gems mining) and Government Health, Forest and Agriculture Departments.

After the Activist Rosimand had made the presentation and narrated the current challenges encompassing youth problems, IDPs from Darkut Area of Yasin Valley and financial viability of LSO, it took me by surprise because Rosimand had started his presentation by saying how rich and economically well off everybody had become and incredible incomes from fruit and forest produce and this was all reflected on the ground. Hatoon which was a long desolate strip of land with hardly any blade of grass, today was full of trees and greenery.

So I asked Rosimand how do you justify your conclusions after the rosy picture of the situation you had painted in the beginning. This query let loose an outburst by one of the male members. It transpired that this gentleman had organised youth (he himself was pretty old) and staged a takeover. They shifted the LSO office to an expensive rental place in the newly established Ghizar district with headquarters at Gakuch and made the LSO bankrupt with the result that other members of LSO threw them out, brought Rosimand back along with LSO office to Hatoon Bubar Union Council. While this argument and counter argument was going on between the males, I addressed the women who were present in a large number and asked them how would they like to manage the LSO if AKRSP works only with them. There was resounding positive response from the women. Rosimand also seconded this approach. Muzaffar offered them full AKRSP support if 100% households would form active WOs and have young girls also members of WOs along with them.

I promised the males to visit again if they resolve their conflict. At which Rosimand's opponent came and embraced him and said to me we have already

become friends. To teach them a lesson, I told Muzaffar to work only with women, let the men come to women if they want anything from the LSO.

It was now getting late in the evening and we still had Sherqilla to visit where people were told we would reach by 4.00 pm. By the time we reached there, it was 6.45 pm. I was surprised and felt most apologetic finding people still waiting there especially women. It was time for them to be in Jamaat Khana but I was overwhelmed by their love and affection. This was the village from where women had written to me to come and meet them and chided me why I was only meeting the men. That letter opened the door for AKRSP to organise women because in Sherqilla, they had already on their own organised themselves and started regular meetings and savings. There was no time to have a detailed presentation and discussion as Muazzin was already giving the call for prayers. I met them and they spoke briefly praising what AKRSP had done for them. I thanked them and asked them who were the women who wrote the letter. Two women identified themselves who were only students of middle school who with the help of the Activist Shah Duran wrote the letter. The event happened exactly 32 years ago. I was happy to identify the two ladies who had the courage to take this memorable initiative. I promised to visit Sherqilla again soon for a longer time and thanked them for their patience especially women, who I was told, were waiting from 2.00 pm.

Next day, after spending the night at Gilgit, we left 7.00 am to drive to Sust, the last village on Karakoram Highway (KKH) before climbing the Khunjarab Pass to enter China. Since 2010 the Ataabad lake had devoured nearly 25 kms of the KKH. In the last two years, the Chinese by tunneling 8 km of mountains have enabled vehicles to avoid the lake. Except for Ataabad and another small village Ayeenabad the road is now accessible by all the villages cut off by the lake. Throughout our journey the plantation of trees was incredible.

We drove straight to Sust Channel tunnel within three hours of our leaving Gilgit, thanks to the excellent surface of KKH and saw the thousands of kanals planted with trees, orchards and crops of the area. AKRSP had supported the VO with a little over Rs. 300,000 to tunnel nearly 1400 feet of mountain to bring water from the glacier to the desolate area of thousands of kanal. Besides the area under green cover, the VO also gave over 203 kanals for a dry port in partnership with government and the Chinese. The VO was offered 18 billion rupees to sell the land but they preferred a partnership in the income of the dry port in perpetuity. I was simply amazed at the far sightedness of the VO.

We met the LSO members of Gujal Rural Support Programme (GRSP) and some representatives from Chapursan Valley, Shimshal and Ghulmit. The GRSP was registered in 2007 with 32 VOs/WOs, 4 CSOs and 4 Youth Organisations (YOs) comprising 982 hh with General Body of 36 members and BoD of 16. It has three paid professionals manager, finance officer and social mobiliser. Its 11 villages have Rs. 13.98 million savings. The LSO has undertaken projects comprising infrastructure, hydro power, community centre, public toilet, vocational activities, youth initiatives, women health initiatives and enterprise development costing over Rs. 35 million.

GRSP forged linkages with LG&RD, USAID, KADO Himat, JLI, CAI, JKA and Department of Agriculture besides AKRSP.

Despite all these impressive achievements, GRSP was still asking for the support from AKRSP as in the past and I reminded them the example of the cow and the calf and exhorted not to look at AKRSP but towards Administrative and Political Pillars who have all the resources. Their first priority should be to make GRSP financially viable instead of ad hoc measures to meet the administrative and operational expenditure of the LSO. The most durable measure would be the nearly 1000 members of VOs/WOs and others contributing a fixed amount monthly or annually.

Chapursan is the most remote valley which links with Kilk and Mintaka Pass leading to Pamir, the old silk route before KKH was constructed via Khunjarab as the Chinese planned to be as far away as possible from old Soviet empire currently Tajikistan. Kilk and Mintaka were adjoining the Central Asian States and Afghanistan. Chapursan Local Support Organisation (CLSO) was formed in July 2008 comprising 22 VOs/WOs with 442 households spread over 11 small villages. The CLSO has a savings of Rs. 14.69 millions. They also have as many as 12 partner organisations helping them in different fields including government departments, donors and NGOs besides AKRSP. Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) assessed them as the best LSO in GB. They have created an endowment fund for financial viability of the CLSO. Every member of the VOs/WOs is paying Rs. 10 per month for financial sustainability of CLSO. The CLSO has also created health, education and disaster fund to meet upcoming challenges. The accounts of CLSO are audited by a chartered accountancy firm.

Their challenges are internet facility in the area and lack of regular linkages with government, international donors and local NGO due to extreme remoteness of the area.

The representative of Ghulmit LSO comprising 1100 households with 25 VOs/WOs has a savings of Rs. 60 million. They also suffer from lack of dependable internet facility. Unemployment is the most serious issue sometimes even leading to suicides.

Shimshal, in the days of Mir of Hunza, was the Mir's open prison where so-called criminals and mischief makers were banished for life like India's Andaman Nicobar Island in the Indian Ocean. During my tenure as GM AKRSP, the people of Shamshal's only demand was road because the nearest habilitation Passu was a four to six days most hazardous journey crossing over umpteen glaciers and hillocks. The only outsiders who used to go to Shamshal were trekkers. A

year before I went to Gilgit, the Everest conqueror Sir Edmund Hillary had been on Shimshal Trek. I could go there only by helicopter. With great effort and with support of Commissioner and Mir of Hunza, AKRSP helped Shimshalis to construct some portion of the road at the beginning and Shimshalis constructed a few miles at the end by self-help's effort. It did cut down the journey by a couple of days but the middle hazardous part still remained. I was happy to learn subsequently government took it up and now it is less than 4 hour journey. Shimshal has 230 hh comprising 8 VOs and 8 WOs. The new GM AKRSP is from Shimshal.

Ghulkin is probably the richest VO in Hunza and Gojal Valleys with a savings of Rs. 35 million and is running an internal banking system. Living standards have improved especially in health and education but they also face problem of youth unemployment and recovery of loans.

Shandana, who on return from Afghanistan is to rejoin RSPN, asked about the advantage of CPEC. Most of the people could not think of direct benefits to the area but hoped for indirect benefits including increased tourism from abroad.

One of the most positive developments we noticed this year, was influx of local tourists from down country. All the hotels and guest houses were full and many just camped on roadside. The Chief Minister told us that this year 12 lac tourists from down country have come to GB. A worrying sign for me was too many black beards and in some villages in Ghizar even some of the residents showed these signs. I was reminded of Swat how one single house in some villages proved the bane of the whole village becoming the centre of Taliban. I earnestly urged GM AKRSP to sensitize LSOs/WOs/VOs to beware of such elements.

Our next stopover was Aliabad. It is no more a village. It is urbanized with all the characteristics. There is no more that level of social cohesion. People have become fairly well off and individualistic which is a logical phenomenon of

urbanization. The only cohesion is amongst women but most of the WO managers, because of lack of education, were male and some of them misappropriated WO savings. In one case in Hyderabad WO in Hunza, the manager usurped Rs. 2.5 million savings of the WO.

However, in Ganesh Hunza's oldest village, the story was different, comprising 12 WOs, 6 VOs and CSO and savings of Rs. 3.2 million, things were different. I agree with Muzaffar that AKRSP should concentrate on WOs, they are there, they have the time and above all they are educated, they don't need any support from male members, in managing their organisation.

Next we crossed over to Nagar and reached Askurdas Rakaposhi Development Organisation (ARDO). In 1983 my first visit to Nagar, Imam Khomeni's followers, I was escorted by Agha Yahya, a Shia divine, in the darkness of the night. There was no question of organizing women or girls education. Today an elderly man was proudly telling me our girls are not only studying for M.Phil, they are pursuing Ph.D. studies. Education Coaching Centres spread education among girls like wildfire. On my last visit, a few years ago, I had seen girls at gem centre learning gem cutting and polishing. It seems youth are taking a lead in Nagar and ARDO has started a new initiative called Community Based Savings Group (CBSG) organizing young girls in groups of ten and 40 groups have so far been formed comprising 500 households out of a total 1500 households in the LSO area. We were told that within two years, these groups have become self-sustaining. The ARDO needed financial support of Rs. 5 lacs for two years for their professional staff. Thus they are asking another million rupees from AKRSP over the next two years to mobilize young women of all the 1500 households.

I see an opportunity for AKrSP to get all the young women of Nagar mobilised in this way, provided ARDO agrees to federate the CBSG's into WOs and subsequently into women led LSOs. ARDO is being led by young educated activists and a former employee of AKRSP Muhammad Ali, who also access

projects from donors. AKRSP should encourage the volunteer element in ARDO and only restrict its support to the professional staff for fostering CBSG for next two years, leading to formation of WOs and LSOs.

Our final visit a day later was to Danyore LSO now a suburb of Gilgit town. Formed in 1997, it comprises VOs 22 and WOs 46 and CSOs 13 representing 6500 households almost 95% of the total households of the area. The LSO has a savings of Rs. 44.5 million and has undertaken umpteen activities forging linkages with Government Environment, Planning & Development, Agriculture, Livestock, Forest, Population Welfare, LG&RD, RSPN (CIF of one million), USAID, AKDN, KADO, RUPANI, Agri Business Fund etc., besides AKRSP.

Having done all these activities, the LSO was stuck as how to raise Rs. 50,000 per month as operational cost of LSO. For years AKRSP gave them a subsidy of Rs. 30,000 per month which it had stopped for some time back. When I asked them is it very difficult for your 6500 members to subscribe Rs. 10 per month to meet the operational cost of LSO. A lot of discussion started taking place and I walked out of the meeting to allow them to come to a decision. The Chairman of the LSO Kamran, an educated youngster, came to me and assured me the matter will be discussed in the General Body meeting due next month.

I spent a day in meetings the staff of AKRSP and the heads of the Administrative and Political Pillars. With the staff I had a free and frank discussion about the rationale of AKRSP and the importance of the Social Pillar, its linkages with Administrative and Political Pillars.

We also met Dr. Ehsan who is the Coordinator for IFAD funded Economic Transformation Initiative (ETI) with GB government, costing US\$ 120 million with a timeframe of 2015-22. Its objectives are Poverty Reduction and Enhancing Livelihood through Physical Infrastructure bringing 50,000 acre of new land under cultivation and establishing Value Chain. It has allocated Us\$ 22 million for

mobilizing 200 village organisations. I beseeched Dr. Ehsan not to destroy and undermine existing VOs but to revive them if these are dormant and the best glue for doing this is initiation of Community Investment Fund (CIF) for achieving sustainable VOs and from within so organised VOs formation of activities based sub-groups. I would urge Muzaffar to actively collaborate with EMI it is God send opportunity for AKRSP to revive and strengthen the CO/VO/LSO Social Pillar.

I spent a day meeting GB Governor Mir Ghazanfar, the Chief Minister Hafiz Hafizur Rahman, the Speaker Legislative Assembly Nashad and had dinner with Members of the Legislative Assembly which included the Deputy Speaker and the Minister of Local Government Rural Development joined by the Governor and MLA Rani of Hunza Ateeqa.

In my discussion I explained what role the VO/LSO, the Social Pillar, can play in acting as a receiving mechanism for the services and supplies meant for them, placed at the disposal of the Administrative and Political Pillars. I requested the Governor and the Chief Minister to take steps to formalize the relationship between Social Pillar and Administrative and Political Pillars. Currently it is ad hoc dependent on the whims and willingness of individual officials or MLAs.

The meeting with the Speaker and later with MLAs where I gave a detailed description how the Social Pillar reaches each and every household especially the poorest of the poor, which Administrative or Political Pillar cannot and if poverty is to be reduced, a programme has to reach the household of the poor to identify what potential the poor has to rise above the level of subsistence and what obstacles are preventing the poor men or women to unleash their potential to improve their living standard.

Speaker Nashad, as Chairman District Council in 1985, had persuaded AKRSP to come to Baltistan by pooling Union Council funds of the District Council at disposal of AKRSP. He was fully convinced of what I was saying but I was most

pleased and impressed by the Deputy Speaker who seized the idea and strongly advocated that funds placed at the disposal of MLAs, amounting to Rs. 70 million annually, should be spent by involving communities through Social Pillar. He lamented currently most of these funds lapse because the Departments didn't either have the time or willingness to prepare project proposals of the schemes submitted by the MLAs. There seemed a general consensus amongst the MLAs present. Since there are 33 MLAs, it was decided to have a meeting of all, to be called by the Deputy Speaker, to discuss and decide how to do this. A suggestion was also made to the Minister LG&RD to incorporate such a provision in the LG Act.

The Governor had pooled the grant he got as member Advisory Council in the eighties with AKRSP for the Shimshal road. He expressed lot of support for the proposal.

The Chief Minister who seemed well versed with challenges facing GB and displayed great political acumen and was most sympathetic to the idea of formalizing relationship between Administrative and Social Pillars.

The Chief Minister also spoke about the proposal of setting up of GB Rural Support Programme and mentioned that he had included my name amongst the Directors, without asking me, to ensure sound advice to GBRSP. He also complained that AKRSP did not do anything for Gilgit town and it was now facing sewage, sanitation and garbage collection problems besides disposal of solid waste. I submitted that AKRSP was a rural support programme. Gilgit town was not in its jurisdiction. Secondly, I explained that rural and urban situations are different especially in terms of social cohesiveness. I mentioned the work done by Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi which has developed a world renowned urban development approach. If the CM wishes, I can arrange to get experts from Orangi to come and advise what should be done in Gilgit. I also mentioned to the

Chief Minister a number of villages, I observed, are becoming small townships, and the real need is not a GBRSP but a GB Urban Development Programme.

I am most grateful to CEO AKDN Akhtar Iqbal for facilitating my visit to GBC and to GM AKRSP Muzaffaruddin for inviting me and to the entire AKRSP team who extended overwhelming courtesy and affection. I feel Muzaffar is very lucky. He has taken over the reins of AKRSP at a time when there is tremendous goodwill for AKRSP at the highest level of Administrative and Political set up and a major IFAD initiative is on the anvil.