

Note for Record

By: - Shoaib Sultan Khan
November 03, 2017

Subject: - AKRSP Odyssey Oct 19-25, 2017

Muzaffaruddin, the shepherd boy from Shimshal, the most remote village in Gilgit which used to take four days of trekking on such difficult terrain that a year before 1982, when I took over as GM AKRSP, Edmund Hillary, the conqueror of Everest, came to conquer Shimshal. Muzaffaruddin is now General Manager AKRSP whom in 1990 I recruited as a lowly Social Organizer. Courtesy Muzaffaruddin I was visiting Gilgit and much against everyone's advice because CEO AKDN Akhtar had very kindly offered to make the helicopter available, I took the flight and poor Muzaffar who arrived early morning from Dubai and spent three hours at the airport to accompany me at 6 am.

During the stay at Gilgit Muzaffar arranged for me to call on the Governor, the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary and the Planning Secretary besides visits to Sherqilla, Gahkuch, Ishkoman valleys in Ghizar district, Rahimabad in Gilgit district, Sikandarabad village in Nagar district and Ahmedabad in Hunza district. Thanks to the availability of helicopter I was also able to visit remote valleys like Immit where temperature at midday was -5 c in Ghizer and Chapursan in Hunza district which connects Kilk Pass where China Afghanistan via Wakhan Corridor formerly Soviet Union now Tajikistan and Pakistan meet.

The meeting with Governor Mir Ghazanfar and his wife Rani Ateeqa, who is also a member of the GB Legislative Assembly, was concentrated on linkages between GB Annual Development Plans and AKRSP. Rani Ateeqa being chairperson of the Water and Power committee expressed great interest in collaboration with AKRSP and requested Muzaffar to keep in touch with him. Mir Ghazanfar had also helped AKRSP with one million rupees to initiate part of the Shimshal road to which Commissioner added another million and AKRSP raised a million and the four day trek to Shimshal was reduced to 2 days by constructing a Jeep able link road from Passu. Since then Govt. took up the construction of the road building of many bridges across glaciers and crevices and the journey to Shimshal can now be done in three hours.

The Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman was very kind to receive me and discussed different development projects his govt. had initiated and completed and other projects included in the ADP. He was also very positive toward collaboration of govt. departments and AKRSP. I submitted to him that the institutions of the rural people fostered by AKRSP in shape

WOs/VOs/LSOs are a very effective channel for delivery of govt. services and supplies. In my last meeting almost six months ago, the Chief Minister had informed me that without my consent he had made me Director of the newly established Gilgit Baltistan Rural Support Programme. I had requested him at that time to ask GBRSP to concentrate on social sector interventions as AKRSP's objectives was to double the income of the million people in GB and Chitral and therefore it had focused on the productive sector. He had endorsed the idea.

My meeting with the Chief Secretary Kazim Niaz, was one of the most productive and useful meeting I ever had with the govt. officials. I submitted to him the need to formalize linkages between govt. departments and the institutions of the rural people (WO/VO/LSO) fostered by AKRSP, which are most willing to complement and facilitate govt. departments in delivery of their services to the rural population. I requested him to take an appropriate action to ensure the govt. departments especially at the district, Tehsil and local level consider it as part of their official duties to involve the institutions of rural poor in planning and deliveries of their services and supplies. The Chief Secretary most positively reacted to this request.

In regard to GBRSP I requested him to divert it to make achievement and facilitation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as GBRSP mandate. He enthusiastically welcomed this idea. And finally, I requested him, as seeing is believing, to visit the WO/VO/LSO which AKRSP can arrange at his convenience. He agreed later, to come with me to meet the representative of WO/VO/LSO of District Ghizer at Gahkuch which I have discussed later.

My meeting with Secretary Planning was equally very productive and useful. In Mr. Babar Aman Babar I found great emphasis on implementation instead of wasting resources by surrendering ADP funds or initiating large number of projects which are not likely to be completed in foreseeable future. The Note for Record (NFR) of my meeting with the Planning Secretary is at Annexure I.

The Chief Secretary had to leave for Baltistan because of Prime Minister's visit on his instructions an extraordinary meeting of the Board of Directors of GBRSP was convened to which I was invited to advise about future role of GBRSP. The NFR of this meeting is also at Annexure II.

A couple of weeks back while I was taking my evening walk in Islamabad towards Margalla Hills, a car suddenly stopped and one Mr. Mukaddam got out of it and introduced himself as a resident of Gohrabad in Diamer district and said he was fully aware of my work in AKRSP. He also called his wife to come out of the car and meet me on the roadside and introduced her as Mrs. Sofia Mukaddam, Minister of Women Affairs, Youth and Social Welfare. She expressed keen interest in collaboration with AKRSP in helping her achieve the objectives of her Department. I promised to meet her on my forthcoming visit to Gilgit. When I called on her

Department along with Muzaffar and other AKRSP staff, she met us with Secretary of her Department and Directors of different Divisions. One of them Mr. Ikram informed me that he had heard my lecture at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Sussex where he was pursuing a post graduate course. We all were impressed by the Minister's keenness to derive maximum benefit from AKRSP in implementing her Department's projects and programmes, of which Muzaffar assured her whatever was possible.

The main purpose of my visit was to interact with WOs/VOs/LSOs and Muzaffar arranged it in such a way that I was able to interact with a large number of organizations either through valley conferences or visits to a group of WOs/VOs and LSOs.

Immediately on arrival on Oct 19, my first field visit was to Sherqilla in Khizer accompanied with AKRSP professionals Dr Akhtar, Institutions Specialist, Mohd Zaman District Programme Manager, Ms. Yasmeen Qalandar Regional Programme Manager and Alidad communications professional. We met members of four WOs with whom Hasan Alam and Fatima Social Mobilizers were in regular contact. As my main interest was in the financial viability and sustainability of WO/VO/LSO, the institutions of the people, I was most impressed to see that the savings of only 4 WOs ranged from Rs 2.5 million per WO to 8.5 million with a total savings of Rs. 17.9 m. These are the same people who in 1983 when I asked them to save they would respond we are too poor but when I insisted this was one of the terms of Development Partnership otherwise AKRSP cannot work with you, they reluctantly agreed to save Rs 1 per week in their weekly meetings. By the way Sherqilla was one village whose women wrote to me when I had only met men, as I could not dare ask men to bring their women to meet me, as to why I was only meeting men. What was so difficult in AKRSP Terms of Partnership which women could not do. The women of Sherqilla wrote after a couple of months of my visit to nearly 55 villages that they have on their own organized themselves and are meeting weekly and also saving; would I come and show them the way forward. This emboldened me to ask women to meet me if they so desired and the men sheepishly and reluctantly agreed.

As I was trying to judge how viable and willing WO/VO/LSO were to link up with govt. departments, if Chief Secretary issues the requisite instructions to the department, the Sherqilla WOs were more than willing.

Dr. Shahida Jaffrey who had joined AKRSP in 1990 and later became CEO of Baluchistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and after reviving BRSP, was requested by Governor of Baluchistan to set up a Women University in Quetta, Shahida took up the challenge and as Vice Chancellor set up a women university, which has now seen thousands of girls graduating out of it. But Shahida's heart is in Gilgit. She not only built a house for herself but spends months

there. On my arrival in Gilgit I found her there and persuaded her to come with me on field visits. We both were amazed to see the transformation AKRSP has brought about.

Next day I visited Rahimabad in Gilgit district. The LSOs comprised 3,295 households with 5,029 members. Their savings amounted to Rs. 50 million of the 7 LSOs in the valley, namely Oshkandas, Sultanabad and Nomal. The women said they started with saving of Rs. 5/- per week and women empowerment's main source are savings and training once they got organized.

The male VOs are 51 with 2,170 members and 1,116 youth and Rs. 25 million savings of Mahmoodabad, Danyare, Sultanabad, Rahimabad and Nomal Nalter.

On Oct 21 I visited Sikanderabad Nilt in Nagar district. Nagar is fully followers of Imam Khomeini. I was taken there on my first visit in the darkness of night by an enlightened Agha Yahya. Today I could not believe my eyes to see not only men but a large number of women were also there to greet us. I also saw my old friend who was a teacher Muzaffar Shah and had set up an organization called Naunehal to encourage quality education both for boys and especially girls. I had also brought President Musharraf to visit Naunehal who donated Rs. 5 lacs to the organization. Muzaffar Shah told me proudly that currently 20 farmers from Nagar had gone to Japan for training. On my last visit to Nagar I met girls who had M.Phil. I was happy to see old AKRSP Social Organizer Ali Mohammad Faizi taking active part in development of the WOs/VOs/LSOs after his retirement.

A detailed presentation was given of WO/VO/LSO, of Upper and Lower Nagar. In Nagar II Tehsil there are 68 WOs/VOs of 3,483 households and a saving of Rs. 7 million. On my showing surprise at low savings, an old woman came forward and said we have Rs. 8 million in our account of Bar valley from trophy hunting. It brought back when in eighties I had visited Bar valley and they asked for Rs. 250,000 per year to employ professional hunters of the valley as wildlife Guards, Thanks to Syed Babar Ali President Pakistan WWF who gave AKRSP the money and I got the ibex counted by wildlife Department expert who came up with a figure of 200 ibex. After a year when I asked Ashiq Ali to recount, the number had increased to 700 because the ibex of surrounding valleys also migrated to Bar valley being a safe haven.

This was beginning of all valleys in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral conserving their wild life and with wild life department agreeing to give the people of the valley 75 % of the trophy hunting proceeds. People can now watch wild life from road side besides large incomes accruing to the people. GM AKRSP told me that this year one Markhor was auctioned for \$100,000.

The presentation of WOs was given by Saima and Malika, two very confident office bearers of the WOs. They had all the data of almost all WOs of Bar, Budalas, Chalt Bala Payeen,

Rahbat Bala Payeen Chaprote, Kazimabad, Yal, Ghulmet, Basin, Markhu, Dadimal, Fikar, Hakochar and many others.

However, I urged the WO/VO/LSOs to strengthen their organizations if they desired to link up with govt. departments to access their services and supplies and development programmes. GM AKRSP took note of the measures needed to be taken, as identified by the gathering.

My visit to Ahmedabad was full of nostalgia in Hunza district. It is situated along the Karakoram Highway (KKH) but across the river Hunza. I was pulled across the river in a basket to reach the village. This showed how remote and inaccessible some villages were despite the KKH passing by them. A link road with a bridge on the river transformed Ahmedabad in such a way, with the hard work of the villagers, that I gave its example in my UN General Assembly speech in 2009. Today Ahmedabad was accessible even from Karimabad Hunza by a road running on the right bank of the river.

The Deputy Commissioner Hunza Samiullah Farooq also accompanied us and hundreds of women and a lesser number of men had assembled to greet us. In this valley there were 74 WOs, 19 VOs comprising 6,254 households and a savings of over Rs 30 million. When the men voiced complaint against AKRSP for not visiting them as often as I used to do. I gave them the example of cow and the calf and asked them when the calf becomes adult what does the cow do if it tries to milk her. The women responded the cow hits the calf. One of the men stood up and to the great laughter of everyone said that I had put the women on pedestal and shamed men but the fact is men have still not grown up from being calves.

The Deputy Commissioner not only sat through the couple of hours of the meeting and preferred it to another very high profile event happening in the district. In his remarks he called it a historical day and described Hunza the most progressive district in term of literacy and women development. He observed AKRSP as a role model of development and community participation and is being studied by scholars all over the world. It has changed the way of thinking of people. Govt. is ruthless in most cases benefitting only a few elements. The community should mould the thinking of the govt. and interacting with the LSOs today he saw what their strength is. He was very positive to the proposal forging formal linkages between LSOs and Govt. departments at various tiers of govt. at different levels in the district.

October 22 was a red letter day in the history of AKRSP the Chief Secretary Kazim Niaz agreed to participate in an assembly of 13 Local Support Organizations (LSOs) of Gakuch district in Khizer valleys, comprising 54 women organizations (WOs) and village organizations (VOs mostly male) spread over 5 tehsils, 119 villages with 4,626 households and a population of 20,500. The Deputy Commissioner Shuja Alam, the Senior Superintendent of police and many

heads of the district departments were also present there were over 300 community activists present.

The Chairman LSO, network Moazzam Mir recounted the message AKRSP gave them in 1983 comprising principles of organization, savings and human skills which they have not forgotten to this day. The WOs/VOs federated into LSOs formally from 2008 onward, previously having informally organized themselves in clusters. The objectives of LSOs are facilitating WOs/VOs in achieving a peaceful environment and forging linkages with govt. departments and other donors and NGOs for environmental protection accessing local services and supplies at the disposal of departments, advocacy and achieving sustainability of WOs/VOs/LSOs through financial viability by contributions from 6,200 members of WOs/VOs.

LSOs have forged linkages with line departments, BISP, Hashoo Foundation, Rupani NGO, Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN) besides AKRSP and also with Jubilee Insurance Company for health insurance and others. They have also held conventions within and outside district and also sent a delegation to Diamir district. Their other activities include sports activities, gem cutting and polishing, peace committee and seminars with Shia and Sunni communities.

Ms. Durdana from Gakuch Bala presented how WOs comprising 5,161 members including 936 youth having a savings of Rs. 110 million far beyond savings of men VOs.

The Chief Secretary in his address appreciated the AKRSP approach which concentrated on poverty of mind a vision unlike approach of govt. departments. He urged on the assembly members to reduce the trust deficiency between people and govt. After all it is your government and like trust between brothers we should all strive for their trust. For his part he assured them to take steps to forge a formal linkage between WOs/VOs/LSOs, and govt. department which would be of mutual benefits to both.

The Chief Secretary informed the gathering about the projects and steps being taken by govt. like appointment of specialists at Gakuch District hospital. Sewerage and Sanitation, water supply scheme and over all town planning of Gakuch. He referred to the planned CPEC highway passing through Khizer and over Shandur to Chitral. He invited their proposals for tourism development and improvement of the natural park set up adjoining Gakuch.

The helicopter became available on Oct 23 and flew us to Ishkoman Valley landing at Belhenz near Immit village. Immit I well remembered because I had to take Oxfam Representative, Nick Gardner who had come from Oxford, to a project they had funded which was an irrigation channel up above Immit at 11000 feet elevation. It took us ten hours walk up and down to see the channel. The visit this time was no less memorable. When I flew from Gilgit at was 20 C and at Belhenz at mid-day it was -5 C. The villagers had provided us blankets

to wrap us up otherwise we would have frozen at the valley conference. Shahida delighted in taking photographic record of our misfortune.

Mohammad Jamal Tahir the District Programme Manager of AKRSP outlining the objective of the valley conference was sharing progress and experience of the WOs/VOs/LSOs Chattarkhand Ishkoman Valley. Immit LSO comprising WOs 39, with 2,590 members and 42 VOs with 1,940 members. Their savings are over Rs 3 million. Their activities included a wide spectrum including a Youth Resource Center and linkages with Govt., AKDN and AKRSP in the fields of Environment, Drug control, Agriculture Disaster relief and rehabilitation and with NGOs, vocational training and education by USAID, Hashoo Foundation and Central Asian Institute.

Jannat Nauroza of Immit described the achievements of 14 WOs comprising 1667 households with 1473 members plus 573 youth and savings of 9.6 million rupees. One after the other we heard progress of WOs/VOs/LSOs as the savings ranging from 3.1 million to 10.15 million rupees cumulatively over Rs 40 million in the entire valley. Each one of the WO/VO/LSO actively pursuing their agenda of activities including linkages and future plan along with identification of problems and efforts to overcome them.

One of the oldest Roza Baig stood up and reminded me of Shah Faqir and Mohd Yunus and others who were no more in this world. He proclaimed no one was poor now, everyone had good income from potatoes and other crops and activities including service sector commissions in Pakistan Military Academy but people have also become materialistic. There is no respect for the old as it used to be.

From the helicopter it really appeared a prosperous area with beautiful roofs of the houses and greenery all around. I even saw a Bridge connecting Nomal to the KKH. On my first visit there, it was a Shia village, they asked me to request Sir Agha Khan to build a bridge for them. I had to explain that AKRSP can only have partnership with them what the communities can do with programme support. The river was azure blue. It felt like being in Europe somewhere. On visit to Chapursan the next day the Attabad Lake looked like a massive emerald with almost six tunnels covering 8 km replacing the portions of KKH devoured by the lake and a new bridge connecting Gulmit and other villages. The Chinese did it all in 18 months. Surprisingly the glaciers, according to latest reports are increasing instead of receding in other places of the world. From the helicopter I could see Ghulkin and Passu glaciers with large patches of white snow on top which normally used to be covered with mud. Chapursan another remote valley on Oct 24 after our visit to Immit the previous day.

Chapursan with 11 villages had only 496 households with memberships of 822 in 22 VOs/WOs and a savings of 16.2 million rupees. District Manager AKRSP Ibrahim introduced us

and Mohd Qurban and Habiba made presentation of the progress, after a long reception line led us to the meeting place. It was cold but not like Immit Sahib Hyat chairman LSO welcomed us warmly.

They pointed out the waste land where with AKRSP support 19 million trees had been planted at Resht with large incomes accruing from timber. The stride made in the field of education. Although according to poverty scorecard, recently done by AKRSP, but for 9 households falling in the category of vulnerable poor none was in the category poorest of the poor and poor. Retired teacher Bahram Baig hotly contested the survey and pointed out lack of higher education facilities in the valley.

The poverty of the valley is inaccessibility for the lack of a truck able road and electricity. AKDN has included this valley for their special development package through AKRSP. I do hope the interventions planned in the package reflect the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants of the valley instead of experts identified projects with consultation with WOs/VOs/LSOs.

On way back from Chapursan the helicopter made a stopover at Gulmit to enable us to visit Morkhan nestling up in midst of two glaciers. I was happy to see a metaled road from Gulmit to Morkhan which took no more than 15 minutes to transport us to the village and it meandered through a forested area where in the past there were hardly any trees. We were welcomed by members of WOs/VOs/LSOs from Misgar to Ayenabad and Shimshal. Neelum Sahiba of Ghulkin Rural Organization (GRO) of which Gohar Aziz is President and Jamila Sultana Chairperson of WOs. There are VOs 20 comprising 2,528 households and 37 WOs with 4,160 members and a savings of Rs 8 million. The VOs have 3,427 members and a savings of Rs. 40 million. This is one of the richest village in terms of savings. I remember well in 1983 on my first visit to VO during the meeting I was informed that the Shiskat avalanche has blocked the road to Gilgit and I might have to spend the night in the area. Somehow, they did manage to take me across the avalanche by foot and a jeep sent from Hunza gave me a lift back to Gilgit. Their success story is an example for others. Sharif Khan has been the moving spirit of the VO. Having recognized his qualities, I was told he is now President of the regional council. I got a SMS from him apologizing for not being in there to receive me. Ghulkin is looking towards Govt. for hydel power, sewerage and sanitation, fruit processing, livestock development etc. and legal status for WOs/VOs. I am confident Deputy Commissioner Hunza will do all that is possible to support WOs/VOs to achieve their goals.

Besides, official interactions and field visits my other engagements included meeting AKRSP headquarters staff, visit to IFAD project ETI (Economic Transformation Initiatives) management group participants and reunion with ex AKRSP staff.

The only discordant note of my entire odyssey was meeting with ETI project staff being implemented by IFAD. The infrastructure component of ETI aims at bringing large tracks of wasteland under irrigation range for crop culture the beneficiaries of the project are to be 100 % mobilized and SMT comprising 7 members have to be formed by the mobilized beneficiaries who have to ensure that 50 % of the investment in the project is paid by the beneficiaries from the income derived from the crops and is pooled into a revolving fund to be used for development activities of the area. AKRSP has been contracted by ETI to mobilize beneficiaries and SMT excluding WOs/VOs/LSOs and ensure that SMTs fulfill their objective of generating 50 % of the cost of the project as revolving fund for development. I am at a loss to fathom why AKRSP signed such an impractical contract. The sooner they get out of it the better it will be for AKRSP. Such bare brain projects have been tried in the past also, mostly coming to grief. Getting 50 % cost reimbursed by the beneficiaries is a tall order.

The meeting with AKRSP staff was a very pleasant experience. Due to paucity of time it had to be very short duration but I was delighted at the young professionals deeply committed and dedicated besides happy with their work including those who were uprooted from the plush environment of Islamabad to come and work in Gilgit.

The meeting with participants of Peshawar Academy doing a management course, comprising grade 18-19 officials was most enjoyable. Again time was short as I had a meeting to attend of GBRSP, especially convened for me. But I was greatly touched by their keenness to meet me and showing pleasure at my finding the time to meet them. All I could do was to share my experience of 65 years of working with special emphasis on my work at AKRSP. I could hardly have any discussion with them except a couple of questions. I was happy that they were going on a field visit to see AKRSP programmes and meet communities. I am sure they would learn much more from them.

Meeting with ex-staff numbering nearly 40 including stalwarts like Noor Ahmed, Dr. Farman Ali, Darjat, Noreen, Iqbal, Kaseer, Dr. Iqbal and many others besides my old drivers Sher Ali, Naib Khan, Ibrahim, Nur Jalil and Dino. It was the contribution of each one of them which made AKRSP. The evaluation teams and the visitors used to express surprise that from the drivers to the GM they all speak the same language. I am most grateful to Muzaffar for arranging this reunion and Dr Akhtar and Yasmeen Karim and Qalandar assured that as many ex-staff could come and were invited.

Murtaza set the tone by an emotional diatribe and all the speakers excelled in deepening my of those memorable 12 years of my life which I always cherish. Shahida was also there and there was a consensus that GM AKRSP should be requested to form an Alumni Association of the ex-employees of AKRSP. Shahida has the experience of Alumni Association of

ADB employees and offered to help information of the association. We would earnestly request Muzaffar to give serious consideration to this proposal.

Thus ended my Odyssey to AKRSP made memorable by Muzaffar and his colleagues who accompanied me whose names I have mentioned in the Notes I am also grateful to Admin Manager Ayaz and Executive Secretary Mushtaq for leaving no stone unturned to make my stay at Gilgit most comfortable. Of course, my old bearer at PTDC Mohd Shah was on duty twenty four hours and so was my old driver Naib Khan. Iftikhar, Muzaffar's driver safely drove us everywhere in the field and in town.

Note for Record

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan

October 28, 2017

Subject: - Meeting with Secretary Planning-Government of Gilgit Baltistan (October 24, 2017)

Mr. Babar Aman Babar very kindly met me in his office. I was accompanied with Dr. Akhtar Ali, Institutions Specialist of Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP).

The Secretary spoke about GB Annual Development Plan which in the current year was over 16 Billion rupees and how in the previous year, he ensured 99% utilization of development funds, unlike the usual phenomenon all over Pakistan of underutilization and consequent surrendering of approved funds. It was for this reason that the Federal Govt was sympathetic to GB's request for development funds.

I briefed the Secretary about AKRSP and how over the years it has succeeded in fostering a framework of grassroots institutions in the shape of community and union level organizations and federating them in Local Support Organization at Union level. The main distinction of these institutions of the people unlike NGOs and social welfare organizations is that the WOs/VOs/LSO have their roots in each and every household.

I recounted to the Secretary, how Govt of Sindh has made use of the community, village and union level organizations by launching a Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) and strongly commended a similar programme for GB's ten districts. In Sindh out of 22 districts, with provincial and donor funding 18 districts are implementing UCBPRP. The mainstay of this approach is social mobilization, community investment fund (CIF), vocational training for employment, health insurance and critical community infrastructure.

The secretary responded that GM-AKRSP has sent a concept note on the subject. He however, desired an approach taking up two districts at a time costing less than 75 Crores, to enable the Department to approve it within the financial Sanctioning powers of the Provincial Development working Party (PDWP). He desired a PC 1 to be developed in consultation with Mr. Alam AC PSD (Ph. 0310-1269918).

I profoundly thanked Babar for his time and sympathetic consideration of AKRSP request.

CC: Mr. Babar Aman Babar, Secretary Planning

Mr. Alam AC PSD, Planning Department

Mr. Muzaffaruddin, GM AKRSP

Dr. Akhtar Ahmad, AKRSP

Note for Record

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan

October 28, 2017

Subject: - Meeting of Gilgit-Baltistan Rural Support Programme (GBRSP) on October 24, 2017 at 4:00 pm in Conference Hall, Chief Secretary, Office, Gilgit.

The meeting was convened at the behest of the Chief Secretary and attended by three Secretaries to Govt, four local Directors, IFAD and AKRSP programme's representatives and General Manager GBRSP.

Secretary Finance Mr. Yahya, who was also acting as CEO GBRSP explained the purpose of the meeting to elicit my views about strategy and approach of GBRSP as desired by Chief Secretary, who had to go Baltistan because of Prime Minister's visit there.

Mr. Yahaya gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation about vision, mission and methodology of GBRSP and the objectives it aims at achieving. It was very comprehensive and all embracing.

I submitted that AKRSP had only two objectives, namely, to double the income of the million people living in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral dubbed NAC (Northern Areas and Chitral) and also if possible develop a replicable model of rural development of the South Asia Region with special emphasis on Pakistan. For ten years the programme concentrated on productive Sector to the exclusion of Social Sectors because increasing incomes was the core objective. The World Bank evaluated the programme every five years. In their first assessment the Bank observed that the first four years of AKRSP are the missed four years of all rural development projects including that of the Bank because they were following a blue print approach, whereas AKRSP adopted a process approach allowing the rural people to identify what will increase their incomes, which was within their capacity to achieve if the obstacles in their way to unleash their potential were removed by AKRSP.

To achieve this objective AKRSP adopted the time tested Social Mobilization approach of a development partnership with rural poor which entailed the rural poor fulfilling their objectives of partnership namely, organization, generation of capital through savings and

unleashing their potential by coming up with a micro investment which benefited and increased the income of each household. At the end of ten years, when the Bank did the second evaluation it concluded that in real terms the incomes of the NAC households had more than doubled. In fact in their third evaluation in 2001, the Bank said the even between 1992 and 2002 the income had tripled.

Considering the current situation prevailing in GB, the GBRSP has to identify its niche where it does not unnecessarily trespass on the turf of the line departments of Govt and also does not waste the resources on duplicating what has already been done. It should, in fact take full advantage of what is there on the ground and take maximum benefit from it to achieve its objectives.

I suggested that since AKRSP did not implement Social Sector interventions and concentrated on the productive sector but to achieve the objective it fostered a framework of grassroots institutions in the shape of WO/VO/LSO. These are not AKRSP organizations, these are villagers' organizations managed and operated by them, looking forward to linking up with line departments, NGOs, donors, and GBRSP.

As sustainable development Goals (SDGs) are of highest priority of Govt, GBRSP can exploit this niche to their great advantage. The first six Goals directly concern poverty, the next 7-11 Goals concentrate on economic development, the 12-16 goals aim to dealing with threat to poverty and Goal, 17 specifically deals with quality issues and urges Technical and Service agencies to make maximum use of social capital.

GBRSP by making SDGs its core objective will have niche of its own as AKRSP by concentrating on Social Mobilization did not trespass others turf. Success in achieving GBRSP will not only earn accolades for GBRSP, it will also be looked at by Govt very positively, helping it achieve SDGs to which Govt has made an international commitment.

I was delighted that Yahya took my advice in a most positive way and embraced it whole heartedly.

As RSPs value added in implementing SDGs in socially mobilized communities, demonstrated by National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) in 17 district union councils. I offered GBRSP to arrange an exposure visit of GBRSP Management to these Union Councils to learn how it is to be done.

In case of GB, AKRSP has mobilized communities in Gilgit, Baltistan and Astore including all the new districts but not in Diamir where AKRSP was not allowed by religious Leaders to operate in those days. I understand things have changed now however, I would suggest that in

case Diamir GBRSP should do Social Mobilization, as this would be a good learning experience for professionals of GBRSP. AKRSP is most willing to help GBRSP if required.

CC: Chief Secretary-Gilgit-Baltistan

CEO-GBRSP (Mr. Yahya)

GM-GBRSP

GM-AKRSP