

Note for Record

By: **Shoaib Sultan Khan**
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Subject: Comparative analysis of Social Mobilisation Programme in India and Pakistan.

Working as Senior Adviser to UNDP funded Regional Programme “South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme” (SAPAP) from 1994 to 2003 and thereafter visiting India on the invitation of Ministry of Rural Development, State of Andhra Pradesh and Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Trust uptill now, I have been fortunate to forge lifelong friendship with IAS officers K. Raju, Vijay Kumar, Sampath Kumar and Rajsekhar and many others including field workers like Vijay Bharati, Murali and Damayanti. If any of them happens to be at Kennedy School pursuing a course of studies, I am invited to visit Harvard. In 2014, it was Sampath Kumar and this year it was Rajsekhar.

This band of IAS officers have spent over a decade of their career in programmes based on Social Mobilisation replicating an army of professionals who think and work like them with total dedication and commitment to the concept of Social Mobilisation. The lead was given by Raju through Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in 1996 and Vijay took it countrywide through National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) in 2011 with full support from Minister Jairam Ramesh. Rajsekhar completed the mission of SERP by 2015 and Sampath took it to scale in UP with the direct support of Mr. Rahul Gandhi. In the words of Akhter Hameed Khan ‘you don’t replicate programmes, you replicate people’. Raju did it in Andhra and Vijay did it in NRLM and Rajsekhar followed it and Sampath Kumar is doing it in UP. Dedicated workers like Vijaya Bharati are doing across many States in India replicating Community Resource Persons (CRPs).

Today including 11 million households organised in Andhra Pradesh, their number has increased to 30 million and NRLM, as part of Indian 12th Five Year Plan is aiming at taking this approach to an additional fifty million, thus Empowering 70 million households comprising 350 million population, half of them women at the Bottom of the Pyramid.

In Pakistan, AKRSP began in December 1982 and in ten years not only succeeded in mobilizing 90% households in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral, according to the World Bank, it achieved its objective of doubling the income of the million people inhabiting the programme area. AKRSP was not an NGO in the traditional sense of the word. It was founded by the Aga Khan who is internationally given the status of a head of State. The second goal of AKRSP was to develop a replicable model of rural development for the Region beginning with Pakistan. Thus AKRSP was a demonstration for Federal and Provincial Governments of Pakistan to emulate AKRSP example.

The first opportunity occurred in 1992 when I was given the so-called Asian Nobel Prize Magsaysay Award by the President of Philippines on the basis of my work at AKRSP. I was summoned from Gilgit by Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and asked why can't AKRSP be replicated countrywide. My response was it can be only if AKRSP type organisations are set up, which was not for profit joint stock company with an independent and autonomous Board of Directors, endowed with requisite resources by the Government of Pakistan. The PM picked up phone and asked his Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz to come post haste and put my proposal to him. Sartaj Aziz fully supported the idea. The PM convened an Interprovincial Coordination Committee meeting within a fortnight and asked me to make a presentation for a countrywide replication of AKRSP. A ten billion rupees grant proposal was approved spread over 7 years and National Rural Support Programme(NRSP) was given the responsibility with promise of instalments of Rs. 500 million every six months. The first instalment was received in less than a month of the decision from the Ministry of Finance. Unfortunately,

the government was removed by the President, exercising his powers given to him under the Constitution and the dream of replication of AKRSP countrywide remained unfulfilled. The succeeding government showed no interest.

However, we did not give up, USAID had already supported setting up of Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) with a grant of US\$ 5 million as a replication of AKRSP. The Germans persuaded Government of Balochistan to convert their Pak-German Project into Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) , as a not profit company.

In the meanwhile, the Independent South Asia Commission for Poverty Alleviation, set up by SAARC Heads of State in 1991 submitted its recommendations to the SAARC Summit at Dhaka in 1993 and made an overarching recommendation that Social Mobilisation should be the centerpiece of all poverty alleviation strategies of the governments of South Asia. The Commission further recommended that none of the existing government institutions were organised to do it and recommended a similar approach like NRSP adopted by Government of Pakistan and setting up of independent and autonomous support organisation with their Board of Directors, fully funded by respective governments.

The recommendation was unanimously endorsed by the Heads of State in 1993 at SAARC Dhaka Summit, but no action was initiated by any of the governments. However, the World Bank convened a workshop at Annapolis and also invited the members of the Commission including me, as I was a member of the Commission from Pakistan, nominated by the government. At the workshop, Henning Karcher of UNDP New York, who had served in Pakistan and seen my work approached me if I would be willing to be Senior Adviser, if UNDP launches a Regional Programme on lines of South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) to operationalize the recommendation of the Commission, which had received endorsements at the highest political level in South Asia.

After getting His Highness the Aga Khan's personal blessings to take up the mission and permission to leave AKRSP, I embarked on setting up of demonstration pilots in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. My main challenge was to find one person in each country who would fully believe in the strategy of Social Mobilisation and dedicated to implement in the demonstrations. I found such persons in most of the countries, in India it took a year but these/there were the replications I was looking for. They were called National Project Coordinators (NPCs).

In Bangladesh, the Kishoregunj Demonstration was so successful that on her visit to the project, the Prime Minister Hasina Wajid decided to replicate it countrywide and asked the NPC to become Secretary to Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The NPC got carried away and accepted the offer of PM. The entire bureaucracy turned against him and that was the end of the SAPAP in Bangladesh. In Nepal SAPAP made considerable progress but with Maoist insurgency, it couldn't go very far. In Sri Lanka, there was a national subsidy programme Samurdhi and SAPAP, a hard programme did not get all the resources. In Maldives, it made considerable progress in replicating it from one Atoll (a collection of about 15-20 islands) to a few adjoining Atolls, so long as Government of Maldives supported it.

In Pakistan, when SRSP faced financial crunch due to stoppage of USAID funds due to Pressler amendment, I decided in future RSP will only be established if the sponsors agree to give an endowment grant upfront. NRSP survived because the Board converted the first instalment of Rs. 500 million into an endowment and initiated work from the income of the money so invested in high interest bearing deposits like Khas Deposit which gave 18% return in those days. Thus Ghazi Brotha RSP was set up in 1995 with an endowment from Water & Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP) was given a similar endowment like NRSP in 1998 and out of the blue

Government of Sindh set up a Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) with double the amount of endowment than Punjab in 2003 and asked me to chair the Board and Azad Jammu & Kashmir RSP was set up in 2007 with an endowment also. This ensured the survival of all the RSPs and kept them immune to political or bureaucratic interference.

Each RSP being an independent and autonomous entity, decided in 2000 to set up a Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), adequately funded by UK AID (DFID) and RSPN overtime built up its own endowment.

At the behest of the World Bank, the interim Government of Pakistan initiated by the Finance Minister Dr. Hafiz Pasha in 1999, submitted a proposal to the Bank for funding of the approved Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), a not for profit joint stock company on the pattern of RSPs to ensure a regular access to resources by RSPs and other similar civil society development organisations. The Vice President of the World Bank Meiko Nishimizu invited me to Washington DC to convince her sector managers that Pakistan had the capacity to make productive use of the fund. I held two days workshops, assisted by Azmat Isa, formerly CEO of BRSP, an employee of the Bank at that time. Meiko got US\$ 91 million approved by the Board of the Bank and PPAF in Pakistan became lifeline especially for RSPs but Government of Pakistan never endowed PPAF with requisite resources to enable a countrywide replication of AKRSP. Nor did the provincial governments ever embarked on a province wide poverty reduction programme through Social Mobilisation strategy, so strongly commended by the Independent South Asia Commission on Poverty Alleviation in 1993 and endorsed by the SAARC Heads of State.

Despite ad hoc, lukewarm and sporadic support from Federal and Provincial Governments (with the exception of Province of Sindh), RSPs kept the movement alive and in terms of the presence in 124 districts out of 131 with over six million rural households mobilised in over 350,000 community organisations

but without full access to AKRSP's holistic package of interventions. The credit goes to Chief Executive Officers late Hussain Wali Khan, Steve Rasmussen, Izhar Hunzai, Abdul Malik in AKRSP; Feroz Shah and Masoodul Mulk in SRSP; Dr. Rashid Bajwa in NRSP ably supported by GM (General Manager) Agha Javad; Shahida Jaffrey and Nadir Gul in BRSP; Malik Fateh in GBTI; Suleman Shaikh, Nazar Memon, Sono Khangharani, Naheed Shah and Dittal Kalhoro in SRSO; Shandana Khan and Khaleel Tetlay in RSPN; Roomi Hayat in IRM (Institute of Rural Management) and Zahoor Hussain in NRSP Bank. They explored every available opportunity to strengthen their programmes and more importantly dedicated themselves for long periods to ensure continuity of the approach. Of course, the volunteer chairpersons late Ramzan Merchant, Ali Rattansey in AKRSP; Azam Khan and Munawar Humayun in SRSP; Sardar Tareen in BRSP; Fazlullah Qureshi in SRSO; Amir Usman in GBTI; Dr. Humayun Khan in IRM and Dr. Rashid Bajwa in NRSP Bank and Directors gave their full support. So it is not that Pakistan lacks in dedicated and committed professionals or volunteers and above all communities and their activists like the CRPs in India are simply waiting for the opportunity to show their quality of Social Capital.

Donors played and are still playing a big role in keeping Social Mobilisation movement going in Pakistan. Currently European Union is championing the cause of Social Mobilisation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan Provinces through relevant RSPs. But as European Union says, it is not a substitute for government.

Prof. Tariq Banuri, who also taught at Harvard and is currently at Utah University, did the following analysis of the reasons why Pakistan lagged behind compared to India:

“Recall that the Pakistan rural support programmes are older than the Indian programmes by at least a decade. These programmes are widely acknowledged to be highly successful, and in fact provided the inspiration

for the Indian programme. Yet, it must be admitted that the Indian programme, especially the one in Andhra Pradesh has been able to go beyond its source of inspiration in terms of coverage as well as achievements. Why has this been the case?

First, it is clear that long-term political commitment and support for the strategy of social mobilization in India has helped achieve miraculous results. The fact that this support was able to transcend a major political transition is most exemplary. Poverty eradication is a common political agenda and should unite rather than divide political protagonists.

Second, because of the political support and ownership, India has been able to build a top class pool of professionals largely from government, whose commitment, dedication and sensitivity towards plight of the poor made a success of the programmes like SERP, NRLM and RGMVP. Raju laid the foundation of SERP and his mission was carried forward by Vijay and currently by Rajsekhar. In nearly two decades of its existence, the leadership of SERP has seen only three changes. But for Raju there would have been no SERP.

Third, the sustained governmental support has also translated into a cascading of institutional development. Unlike Pakistan, NRLM is a mainstream programme of Government of India, which can nurture and invest in state programmes. This provides it both legitimacy and viability. This support is visible in the personal commitments expressed by the Union Minister for Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh, as well as the top leaders of the ruling Congress Party, Smti Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi. In a mature democracy, governments and leaders can change, but if the example of Andhra Pradesh has something to teach us, it is that the commitment to poverty eradication will survive all such transitions.

Fourth, the innovative element that has evolved from SAPAP through SERP, and now NRLM, namely the CRP-based model of saturation and cloning, is itself worthy of emulation and cloning.

Finally, and above all, the programme owes its success to working only with women; in Pakistan by contrast the ratio of women's participation is stagnating at 48 percent. Above all it is the women of Andhra who not only blazed the trail in their own state but also in other states and did it with extraordinary success and dynamism”.