

Note for Record
November 11-14, 2010

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Subject: Aftermath of Floods in Sindh

Before proceeding to Sukkur, I was fortunate to find Dr. Kaisar Bengali, Adviser Planning to Government of Sindh (GoS) in town who very kindly met me in his office, joined by Secretary Planning Department Ms Naheed Shah Durrani and Project Coordinator Dr. Shirin.

It was a very useful meeting for me, as Dr. Bengali spelled out GoS determination to have a strategy of total Village Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (TVRR) of all the flood affected villages with over 200 hh in Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) in the districts of Shikarpur, Kashmore-Kandhkot and Jacobabad. Initially 43 villages have been identified as the focus of this approach. A spin off of this approach is the expectation that smaller settlements surrounding the big village, may also be persuaded to shift in the village, of course, if land to rehabilitate is found. Currently most of such households are at the mercy of powerful Waderas who had accommodated them on their lands.

The components of the TVRR include housing, water, sanitation and physical planning of the village. Dr. Bengali also mentioned the drinking water filtration plant for 5,000 villages. SRSO has already installed 26 such plants.

There was also concern about recovery of community investment fund (CIF) and what would be the modalities of writing off CIF in flood affected areas. I clarified as CIF was a grant money to be used as revolving fund by the CO/Village Organization (VO)/Local Support Organisation (LSO), there was no need for write off. What needs to be done was to give a clear message to VOs with CIF that CIF belonged to the entire village and it is upto them how to use the money. Unless they recover and replenish it, the loss would be of the entire village. It is, therefore, the responsibility of all the CO members comprising the VO to devise ways and means to keep the CIF in tact. A clear message should go to VOs that non recovery would result in no additional CIF in the village. Later I was happy to learn at Sukkur that out of Rs. 71 million given as CIF, 69 million had come back.

I had a very useful meeting with Dr. Shirin in her Project Office along with Ghias. I was impressed by the functional look of the office, as earlier I had noticed how Dr. Bengali is enforcing cleanliness in the Tughlaq House.

I also got a chance to visit the newly set up office to undertake BISP sponsored poverty scorecard survey in Karachi comprising 1.8 million households. Survey had begun in Lyari area comprising 104,000 households. Eight teams comprising 15 persons each. The survey has been organized on the basis of each team member surveying 250 households per day. Payments are linked with output plus Rs. 100 per day for food. There is a comprehensive checking and monitoring mechanism at different levels. In addition BISP has detailed its own monitors to carry on continuous checking and monitoring of the forms. There were concerns expressed by some Directors when RSPN and RSPs bid for the assignment. Karachi, as an urban centre, was one of the main concerns. I was relieved to see the arrangements made for the survey and the confidence of the staff in doing it to the entire satisfaction of BISP.

Floods inundated vast areas of the nine districts in which SRSO is operating, especially in the three districts covered by UCBPRP. From August 7 onwards SRSO was mobilised by the CEO Sono Khangharani to respond to this monumental humanitarian catastrophe. As of October 31, SRSO has accomplished the following:

- Provision of cooked food	1.3 million persons	Supported by ENGRO, GoS
- Provision of dry ration	1.8 million persons] WFP, USAID,
- Animals vaccinated/treated	105,003] RSPN, PPAF, ENGRO,
- Fodder distributed	170 MTs] Khaipur District Govt.
- Pelets (animal feed)	10,000 bags] Individual & Corporate
- Livestock support	-] Groups, GOAL Ireland,] DFID/RSPN
- Installed hand pumps	476	UNICEF
- Installed pit latrines	3987	UNICEF
- Hygienic kits distributed	53,643	UNICEF
- Projected WASH (planned)	80,000 hh	UNICEF
- Mobile medical camps treated	238,000	PPHI
- Micro health insurance cover	70,000 hh	GoS

In monetary terms, SRSO mobilised nearly Rs. 1.3 billion (including Rs. 590 million in cash) for its relief operations from August 7 onwards.

The response of SRSO was praised by everyone especially by GoS. The number of donors linking up with SRSO and using it as their conduit for delivery of relief to the unfortunate victims of the horrendous floods, speaks volumes of the quality of leadership of Sono inspiring all his staff by personal example who worked day and night to mitigate the sufferings of the flood victims. Personally, for me it was a great sense of relief and a moment of great pride for Sono and his dedicated and committed staff.

It was not without a sense of nervousness and apprehension that I set out for the field visit. I was planning to hold a dialogue in one of the villages selected by GoS for TVRR package. The journey from Sukkur to Sheralabad in Union Council Haibat of Taluka and district Kandhkot took a little over two hours. The devastation by the flood stared you in the face. It seemed an uprooted countryside with relief camps still visible but more heartbreaking was standing water, which we came across off and on. At Ghouspur, I was shocked to hear how dacoits came in boats when the inhabitants had fled from onslaught of the approaching wave of water and decamped with the valuable personal effects of the flood victims including computers, air conditioners, televisions etc.

As we turned on the link road to Sheralabad from the main road, with water on both sides of the road as we drove, I was expecting to be thronged by crowds of people agitated and demanding, expressing anger and annoyance pleading for help from government. As we entered the village and drove through it, I saw people going about their business paying little heed to our van. Finally we reached our place of meeting and then to my unbelieving eyes over 100 women were sitting, like in the past, waiting for us to come and attend the VO meeting. This was the miracle of social mobilization. Their discipline, patience and determination were incredible. A person who had lost everything, had to leave the village helter skelter when a wave of 15 feet high water engulfed their whole village, where four households lost their loved ones. The Social Organiser Mehtab Channa had instilled all the ingredients of a VO in the members. I could not but had only intense praise in my heart from Ghulam Rasool and his team.

The Chairperson of the VO Sheralabad Ms Shamshad started the proceedings as if everything was normal. Giving us a presentation with the help of charts, as she used to do in normal times, except that out of 382 households, 122 had still not returned. She described what the 182 households who had organized themselves in 10 COs and a VO had implemented under

UCBPRP including Rs. 1.2 million CIF, Rs. 128,000 IGG, 36 lowest housing worth Rs. 2.1 million and a drinking water scheme worth Rs. 262,000. Everything was lost but they assured us about CIF. They are already seized of the matter, how to keep it going. What was not lost were skills 37 persons had acquired in management, book keeping, CIF need identification and its monitoring and TBA training.

Shamshad also described the role of VO during and after floods in distribution of cooked food twice daily, 2 mounds of ration, tent distribution, children's facilitation space, health and hygienic sessions, distribution of hygienic kits and animal ration facilitated through SRSO/N-IRM provided by GoS, District Government, Army, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR and SRSO's own resources.

The VO future planning, according to Shamshad, includes construction of houses, hand pumps and latrines, sanitation system, repair and reconstruction of streets, financial support for businesses and vocational training.

Having concluded the VO's normal business, Mehtab invited the members, if they had anything to add.

Naziran described how rains and sudden water inundated the village. The cost of transport jumped from Rs. 10 to 100, a tractor to Rs. 3000-4000 and large scale death of animals. She and her family rushed to the Bund and sat there till SRSO and Army came to help.

Hajjani described how paying Rs. 3000 to a tractor trolley, she and her children escaped to Guddu Barrage and lost 18 years old son.

Bashiran, her husband and eight children spent two days on the roof. Made a local raft to get to dry ground. Everything was afloat. Got treated at the hospital through Sehat Salammat Card.

Warai lost two children due to snake bite and cholera.

One woman spoke of her husband having been given wrong injection by a quake, still suffering despite treatment at a Rahimyar Khan hospital. As an insured person under micro health insurance, she was assured of proper treatment in a well equipped hospital. The Adamjee Insurance Doctor who was accompanying us took the details of the person to arrange appropriate treatment.

The local Wadera, who is also the Chairman of the Union Council urged action on

- i) reinforcement of Bund, without which the village will permeably be in danger of flooding;
- ii) distribution of Wattan Card, as according to him only 5% of his people have received the card as yet;
- iii) restoration of electricity lines and
- iv) reconstruction of roads.

The VO members reiterated their future village plan, already presented and enthusiastically welcomed GoS TVRR package. However they were unanimous in demanding that the construction of houses should be left to owners strictly according to the plan mutually approved by SRSO and the VO.

Having concluded the dialogue on TVRR plan, we proceeded to see the UNICEF supported latrines which littered many of the villages we saw on the way, distinctly visible in the UN blue colour. The Children's Facilitation space was a beautiful tent in which over 100 boys and girls were sitting. When I asked a boy what did he like most, he shyly replied the tent. On my suggestion Sono agreed to provide energy biscuits to the children midway during their five hours in the tent. This was received with howls of joy although when asked earlier, they had suggested pakoras but energy biscuits won the day.

On our drive back, we were stopped by a crowd of villagers belonging to the minority community living in Sheralabad. Sono thought they might have some grievances. When we got down, all that they wanted was to offer us tea. Sono politely explained to them that tea or food was not in the SRSO terms of partnership with the village, that is the reason SRSO staff is strictly forbidden to accept food or drinks. I took a sigh of relief it was most satisfactory conclusion of a most productive dialogue.

I wish our planners and governments would realize what a tremendous asset is an organized village the presence of a framework of institutions of the people at the grassroots.

From Sheralabad we proceeded to see the Thorbi Bund breach which caused the widespread disaster in Union Council Haibat. On the way we saw people carrying tents distributed by SRSO under the DFID funded Komak project given through RSPN. The breach was a gaping nearly

two hundred yards hole in the 20' by 30' high bund. On the opposite side, we saw the Thorbi Bungalows built in the British days for touring officers who were responsible for upkeep of the Bund. I wonder when was the bungalow last occupied by any of the Irrigation Department touring officers.

On way back, we saw one of the newly installed filtration plants providing bacteria free clean drinking water to a village with population of 300 men, women and children. It is an impressive state of the art equipment installed at a total cost of Rs. 450,000. There was a well trained operator who seemed to be taking good care of the plants. The only area of concern seemed to be the recurrent cost of the plant which the plant we saw, was costing Rs. 22,000 per month. Including Rs. 500 per day as cost of fuel for running the generator. SRSO should have extensive dialogues with the communities where plants are to be installed or are going to be installed to find a practical and feasible solution otherwise history is replete with abandoned drinking water and filtration plant projects implemented by Public Health Engineering Department and others on the assumption that communities will take over the recurrent cost of the schemes. Unless a feasible and doable system for defraying recurrent cost is worked out in consultation with the VO, the future of the filtration plant would be in jeopardy.

The visit to village Joggi (UC Chak, Taluka Lakhi, District Shikarpur) was indeed a silver lining in this otherwise doom and gloom scenario. A year ago when I had visited the village for first dialogue introducing UCBPRP, of the 48 households, according to poverty scorecard, none of the households were above the poverty line. In fact they were all beggars. With IGG support to 4 households of Rs.30,000, CIF beneficiaries numbering 40 getting 348,000, low cost housing for 23 at a cost of Rs. 1.38 million and full coverage with micro health insurance, there was no begging. Each household was engaged in one or other kind of enterprise. The women being in the forefront and providing their menfolk with their example to adopt a respectable way of living instead of disgracing themselves by stretching their palm for alms before everyone. I could see a sea change in the way the women were dressed but more so with the smiles on their faces and the determination in their eyes for a better future for their children. The VO is actively taking steps to get their boys and girls educated.