

Note for Record

July 16 – 19, 2009

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Field Visits:

- i) Social Mobilisation:
 - Village Morio Sabozi, District Kashmore
 - Goth Saleh Malik, UC Gulwali
 - Village Longani, District Shikarpur
 - Village Sheeranpur, District Larkana

- ii) Vocational Training:
 - Government Poly Tech, Sukkur
 - Hotel Mehran, VTEC Sukkur
 - Village Training Programme, Village Dari, District Kashmore

Headquarters Events

- iii) Staff Meetings:
 - UC Based Poverty Reduction Programme (BPRP) Progress Review with Shikarpur/Kashmore Staff

 - SRSO/UC BPRP Staff Meeting

- iv) SRSO BoD Meeting

Under UC BPRP (UC Plan), the quantitative achievements organizing 2560 Cos Federating them in 945 VOs with a membership of 46,492 households in four months is an achievement unparalleled anywhere in the annals of the history of Rural Support Programmes in Pakistan. More so because 100% of the households falling in bottom three bands of the poverty score card (PSC) 0-23 have been organized.

Social Mobilisation depends entirely on the willingness of the community to get organized and select their leaders as office bearers.

As to the quality of Social Mobilisation in terms of understanding of the COs/VOs of the decision making process, I was simply amazed at some of the decisions made by the VOs I visited. For example, instead of giving income generation grant (IGG) to all eligible under the rules, the VO gave it only to those who had no capacity currently to repay. If they were considered capable of repaying, they were given Community Investment Fund (CIF). Thus in Morio Sabzoi out of 11 households eligible for IGG according to PSC, only one household was considered eligible for IGG by the VO and all the 150 women sitting in front of us had reached this decision by consensus. To my mind, this was the best example of a socially mobilized community.

When we interviewed Marvi, the poorest of the poor who had been given IGG, she used the Rs. 18,000 grant in purchasing a donkey cart and other necessities. She was confident that this would help her family to graduate to CIF in a year's time.

Rabri was sanctioned Rs. 9,000 CIF by the VO on the recommendation of her CO, as she was considered capable of only paying back that much in a year's time whereas Shabiran Punjabi was given Rs. 18,000 CIF which she used for purchasing goats and for other activities. Shabiran was sold by her Punjabi father to another of her relatives settled in Sindh. When I asked what she had to pay to get her freedom, she laughed it away, she had to pay nothing.

At Longani UC Dakhan, 11 COs had federated in a VO comprising 199 households of which 3 had received IGG and Rs. 558,000 had been disbursed as CIF. The profile of the IGG was a wage labourer whose son was trained as a barber and she needed Rs. 20,000 to help him set up a barber shop. Shahida Begum got Rs. 25,000 although her daughter was a B.Sc. student. The VO explained Shahida's a well-to-do relative had taken pity on her and educated her daughter. She herself was assetless and very poor. All the IGG and CIF recipients stood up and confirmed the amounts each one had received. This was all transparent and publicly done.

However, when we looked at the record keeping, it left much to be desired. The reason being that 11 COs were being looked after by two bookkeepers. This ratio should not exceed 1:3. The training of the bookkeepers had to be thoroughly done with refresher courses every month in the first year, thereafter the frequency of refresher may be changed to one in a quarter. Although the bookkeepers are to be from amongst good VO managers or teachers and are to be paid out of surcharge on IGG/CIF but they are directly answerable to SO of

SRSO. The Bookkeepers are the key to the success of IGG/CIF and micro credit programme. Any delinquency in this area would be disastrous for the programme. Both SRSO and NIRM, who have been outsourced training of all types of the UC Plan, have to ensure quality training and refresher courses. The Book Keepers should be remunerated on the basis of work they do and not as regular employees on a monthly salary.

I would earnestly ask Sono not to give any further IGG/CIF unless and until the record keeping of the current disbursements are updated and Record Keepers adequately trained and put in place.

The Social Organisers main focus, after the initial motivation and formation of the CO, should be monitoring the quality of the CO which primarily depends on the quality of the CO/VO activists i.e. presidents and managers. If they are not honest and willing and NIRM training does not make them competent, the CO/VO will never able to deliver. It will never be possible by SO to achieve viability of hundreds of COs/VOs formed without the support of honest and competent managers and other office bearers. This is a time consuming exercise. The community resource persons (CRPs) will emerge from this group of activists but it will happen only when the activists have demonstrated their capabilities over a period of time in managing their own COs/VOs. This process cannot be hurried. If you do so, it would be more counter productive than beneficial. Let SRSO select good quality staff and NIRM give them excellent training including refreshers.

It is for this reason that I have persuaded SDPI to undertake a Process Review of the activities of SRSO in UC Plan area. The intention is not to find fault with SRSO but to help Sono and his team to carry out course corrections in time. A stitch in time would save you from many difficulties.

In the community physical infrastructure (CPI) sector, at Morio Sabzoi, a link road was being constructed alongwith a sanitation intervention comprising a toilet linked with a hand pump and also providing drinking water. At one of the sites we saw a functioning old hand pump only a few yards away from the new hand pump. There may be a good reason for doing so but such siting of projects should be avoided. The disposal of the flush water from the toilet should also be done in such a way that it does not pollute the hand pump well as well as it should not become a health hazard.

At Langani the village street was very well cemented and gave a clean look to the village but the drains along the street need to be kept well maintained. The VO promised that they are seized of the matter but the

maintenance system should be clearly spelled out and made part of the terms of partnership (ToP) of the CPI. The CPI engineers should also undertake suitable measures to protect the Longani Girls School from flooding flowing from the street.

SRSO has a good experience of village sanitation and sewerage projects and , as far as, feasible CPIs should be to rid the village of sewage and sewage ponds which not only give the village a unhygienic look, it also adversely affects the health of the inhabitants. Above all it also saves villagers from surface filth spread all over.

Visit to Village Sheranpur (District Larkana)

Sheranpur is situated in the shadow of ZAB and BB's tomb. It has 35 households and according to PSC, all of them fall in the bottom three rung 0-23. SRSO had organized 20 hh in January 2007 and the rest in June 2009.

Though poor, the spirit of the villagers was undaunted. Their activist Aashia gave a spirited presentation of the activities of the two COs they have formed with 38 members and Rs. 17,400 savings. 34 members have taken out health insurance. They have a livestock trained activist and 11 members have taken Rs. 164,000 soft loan.

Activist Fareeda described the impact of enterprise development training she got, Gulshan spoke of the TBA training, Zakia of the livestock and Jamal Khatoon of the soft loan.

The main livelihood of the people of Sheranpur is livestock tending on shared basis. The young heifer or sheep is bought by the investor and passed on to the villager to look after it, till it is ready for sale in the market. A Rs. 8,000 heifer when matured fetches Rs. 30-40,000. The investor deducts the cost of the heifer and shares the profit with the villager on 50:50 basis. The soft loan by SRSO aims at enabling the villager to earn 100% profit.

The Peoples Housing Cell of the Government of Sindh has provided houses costing Rs. 252,000 each to two of the extremely poor households. Of course the two owners are over the moon with their new possessions but these two houses stand out like eyesore surrounding the poor housing of others. When I put the question to the CO members what would they have done if the half a million rupees would have been put at their disposal. Their response was they would have assessed the requirement of each of the members to improve their housing and disbursed the funds accordingly, of course, giving first priority to the extremely poor. In their view the whole village

could improve their housing by investing Rs. 15,000 to 30,000 per house, depending on the state of their present houses. I wish the Peoples Housing Cell would listen to the people.

We also met Sughra Khatoon, Sonal Khatoon, Samul Khatoon of Ratokot UC, Nazeer Begum, Shireen Khatoon and Ghulam Zuhra of Karani UC who had been allotted land under landless Haree Project. They were all very happy and grateful to BB for making such a transformation in their lives.

On our return we also noticed the Rs. 7 million one km road being constructed to connect the village with the main road. A village which has just about 3 donkey carts currently, would probably have used this money in totally banishing poverty from the village, instead of this fancy road.

The achievements in the field of vocational training by N-IRM have been spectacular. In physical terms setting up two vibrant and functioning centres at Sukkur and three village vocational training programme centres (VTP) in such a short time, is highly commendable. How they have done it belies me. 1754 young men and women have already trained.

The VTP I visited at village Dari was buzzing with activity giving training to hundreds of women in two shifts in four crafts with highly motivated instructors, all belonging to the area.

The Government Poly Tech at Sukkur was a shining example of government and SRSO collaboration. The Principal of the Poly Tech and her staff were most happy at this collaboration and so were the girls from the rural areas who had probably ventured out for this kind of exposure for the first time. They all seemed very proud and pleased with their achievements and so were their instructors.

I visited Hotel Mehran in February, when the top two floors were in a dilapidated condition. To see these floors converted into a state of the art workshops and residential accommodation for 150 trainees was a joy to my eyes. I had never expected this would all be done in such a short time.

The main challenge now is to keep a track of the trainees to find out what have they gained by this substantial investment Government of Sindh has made in them. The Process Review being undertaken by SDPI would give some idea on sample basis but SRSO should do a 100% tracking through

N-IRM to assess the effectiveness of training and also to find the market demand for the different trades in which training is being imparted.

SRSO BoD Meeting:

This was the first time four representatives of the Government of Sindh came to Sukkur to participate in the 23rd meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) of SRSO.

Their contribution to the deliberations of the Board was most constructive and positive, especially in regard to the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP). I was most encouraged at Secretary Planning and Coordinator UCBPRP's emphasis on consolidation and qualitative achievement, as the initial work of achieving a critical mass to establish the credibility of UCBPRP has been accomplished in the shortest possible timeframe. In fact in case of Social Mobilisation, as against P&D's target of 18,760 households end June, the organized households number 46,492. This is the foundation on which every intervention will be built. It is, therefore, most important that the foundation is solid and viable. In terms of end June targets laid by P&D, the achievements are as follows:

- Vocational Training	58%
- IGG (non-cash)	25%
- CIF (cash)	133%
- CPI	110 projects initiated 27 completed
- Employment through CPI generated	442 skilled 2562 unskilled
- Poverty Score Card	
87 Union Councils	100% completed
- Extremely Poor	17,220 households
- Chronically Poor	39,321 households
- Vulnerable Poor	47,798 households
- Above Poverty Line	153,649 households

Total: 257,988 households

These achievements are spectacular considering the timeframe i.e. one month for PSC survey and four months for the above cited programme interventions. Sono and his team should be congratulated on this stupendous

achievement. Of course, the tremendous support given by Rashid to Sono made all this possible. Roomi and his N-IRM team worked day and night to put the vocational training package on a sound footing. Ghias in Karachi provided the much needed backup, working hard and meeting deadlines.

The Board also accepted a suggestion made by ACS (Development) to Chairman SRSO to concentrate SRSO's core resources on UCBPRP type interventions. Accordingly the Board decided to allocate Rs. 120 million to Khairpur district programme of SRSO for implementing UCBPRP type interventions in as many Union Councils as possible in the district.

The support given by representatives of the Department of Finance and Local Government was greatly appreciated by the Board. The personal presence of Secretary Planning in the Board meeting and the most constructive role being played by the Planning & Development Coordinator in implementation of UCBPRP were applauded by the BoD.

On my return stopover at Karachi, ACS (Development) Mr. Nazar Mahr very kindly accommodated my meeting in his busy schedule. I was most pleasantly surprised to find him in his office at 0830 hours and as my flight was at 1100 hours, I was taking a chance to catch him no sooner than he arrives although my meeting was at 0900 hours. To my surprise, he was already in his office. I wish all government servants would emulate Nazar's example.