

Note for Record  
February 18-20, 2011

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan  
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**Subject: Visit to Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO)**

I was visiting northern Sindh exactly after three months of my last visit when I had witnessed unprecedented demonstration and many areas still under flood waters and the road side pockmarked with internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps. This time it was soothing to the eyes seeing vast tracts of areas under wheat crop turning the flooded fields into greenery. But sporadic IDP camps could still be seen in some places. One explanation was that some members of the families have stayed back to access food aid still available in camps. I wonder what is going to happen after February 28, the cut off date by donors for emergency food assistance. It is apparent IDPs still need it whether they are in camps or have returned to their villages. Without an extension in food assistance for at least another month, when the wheat crop may be harvested, IDPs are likely to suffer tremendous hardships.

Although Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) are not a relief or rehabilitation organizations, in an emergency situation overnight RSPs and RSPN have reorganized to meet the challenge of providing emergency relief and subsequently helping in rehabilitation phase. During earthquake, Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) helped rehabilitate 110,000 households with resources provided by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). In the recent floods, RSPs and RSPN responded similarly to the best of their capacity and much beyond.

SRSO like NRSP, SRSP, BRSP (Balochistan Rural Support Programme), TRDP (Thardeep Rural Development Programme) and SGA (Sindh Graduate Association) rose to the occasion when floods inundated many of the districts of its operational area. With presence in 9 districts of upper Sindh and covering \_\_\_\_\_ households comprising \_\_\_\_\_ community organisations, most of the donor agencies and Government of Sindh made maximum use of SRSO to provide emergency relief to the flood affectees. I am grateful to the donor who put their trust in SRSO. From September 2010 to February 5, 2011, SRSO's flood relief and rehabilitation activities included (accessing over 3 billion rupees worth of aid):

Flood Support 25,000 families for 43 days

(Relief Commission, GoS, Engro,  
PPAF & GOAL Ireland)

<u>Dry Ration</u> (World Food Programme)	500,000 families
<u>WASH SEX VICES</u> (UNICEF, USAID, UKAID, GoS)	100,000 families
<u>Emergency Health Services</u> (PPHI, Adamjee Insurance, GoS)	238,821 outpatients 754 hospitalisation
<u>Non-Food Items</u> (USA, GOAL, PPAF, ENGRO, District Government Khairpur, Philanthropists)	20,000 families
<u>Livestock Supply</u> (GOAL IRELAND, PPAF, ENGRO)	115,000 animals
<u>Permanent Shelters</u> (GoS)	7,000 two-room houses
<u>Temporary Shelters</u> (USAID, GOAL IRELAND, PPAF, ENGRO)	11,920

The amount of work done by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) SRSO and his team is mind boggling. WFP are said to have commented that never before such large scale distribution had been accomplished in such a short time. From politicians to everyone else, I only heard words of praise of what SRSO did during flood emergency. It indeed was a great source of satisfaction to me personally and I am grateful to Sono and his team for this response much beyond the call of duty.

My field visits took me both to flood affected areas and areas not inundated by flood waters. Ranghapur in Jacobabad district to 225 households was submerged by over 15 feet of flood waters forcing total evacuation on August 11, 2010 and with the exception of less than 10 households, all returned by November. This is one of the villages, GoS has identified under Village Rehabilitation Project. In the first phase, 170 houses are being built. Prior to the floods SRSO had organized 180 households in ten COs which had also federated into a Village Development Organisation (VDO). Despite the trauma, they had suffered the VDO with representatives of all the ten COs, met us in a most disciplined manner. Some of them described their harrowing ordeal, moving from place to place in search of shelter going as far as Karachi, Quetta, Sibi etc.

My advice to SRSO is fully involved the community organisation (COs)/VDOs, in designing procurement of material, construction and monitoring progress and quality. If this is not done,

community complaints will overwhelm SRSO staff otherwise it would be the community responsibility. SRSO should restrict itself to technical advice and quality control according to specifications agreed to by the community. It would be the responsibility of the community to ensure that all members adhere to the terms of partnership (ToP) signed between COs/VDO and SRSO.

Since 7,000 houses are to be rebuilt and many more likely to be added in future, Sono should set up a separate unit to supervise the construction work involved in Village Rehabilitation Project (VRP). It is a good opportunity to incorporate underground sanitation (OPP type) to ensure clean and sewage free environment in the village.

The quality material being supplied by the contractor was not upto the mark. The Engineering Section should involve a committee of the CO members selected by the VDO to monitor and approve the quality of material being supplied by the contractor. The best option would be if the committee agrees to buy the material with technical advice from the engineering section.

The work done under KOMAK Project without involving the community was of poor quality and should be rectified. One can give some allowances of the emergency conditions under which the work was done and the absence of most of the villagers but the engineering section must ensure quality of work at all cost, otherwise SRSO's good work will go down the drain.

My next visit to Local Support Organisation (LSO) Mehran in Union Council Bhurkan of district Shikarpur was most uplifting and heartening. The LSO with a 24-member General Body and 13-member Executive Committee was representing 24 VOs with 2653 organized households. 100% of the households falling in poverty bands 0-24 of the poverty score card (PSC) had been organized. 570 members had availed of Community Investment Fund (CIF), 42 of income generating grants (GG), 206 women and 143 men had been given vocational training for employment. 30 traditional birth attendants have been trained and two business groups have been formed for marketing products who have forged direct linkages with the markets. 1710 members have got Sehat Salam Card under micro health insurance and all 27 members needing hospitalization have been attended to. Of the Rs. 1.6 million given as CIF, Rs. 1.5 million have been returned on due date. The balance has been rescheduled by the CO/VO/LSO considering the circumstances of each case, because according to them, all fingers of the hand are not the same. The circumstances of some are less favourable.

In addition, the organizations have implemented a number of physical infrastructure projects. Many came forward and narrated their life stories of what their condition was before organisation and what it became post organisation. How vocational training helped in earning incomes. How TBA training not only helped pregnant mothers in delivery but was also a source of income to the TBA.

The LSO also took note of the functioning of schools in their union and went to Education Department to ensure teach attendance and provision of missing facilities. The LSO is

determined to have hundred percent enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools. In addition to government departments, LSO has also forged linkages with donors like Engro, Nestle etc. They have even secured a plot for the LSO office through their MPA.

There was lively discussion in which Directors of SRSO Fazlullah Qureshi, Nazar Memon and Rashid Bajwa took part. Fazlullah checked their records and was pleased at the way records were kept. When asked about empowerment, one woman answered she stopped her husband from marrying a fourth time, she would have never dared to do this but for the confidence and courage she gained by being a member of the organisation. They don't refer their disputes to the Wadera now, the organisation settles disputes amongst themselves amicably.

The next day at Khatri Pathano in Khaipur district, I experienced a similar exhilarating experience. The quality of women activists managing the village development organisation (VDO) was amazing. Perveen, Waheeda, Mumtaz Khatoon, Amanat, Razia were real diamonds of the community. Illiterates they could outshine literates any time. The four COs comprising the VDO gave a description of their activities. They had taken full advantage of the Union Council Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Programme and availed of Social Mobilisation, IGG, CIF, VT, Health Insurance and physical infrastructure projects.

The stories by Rasoolan, Mumtaz, Bulbul were heart wrenching and most heartwarming at what they had achieved through their organizations. The story of Shagufta who did beautician training lean to everyone's eyes. Her father died and she broke down remembering her father, her mother was sick, she had to give up schooling, her younger brother had to do labour to earn a living for the family. Now Shagufta earns 3,500 a month and her brother has started going to school. There has been a dramatic change in their life. The Senior General Manager, Adamjee Insurance offered full treatment of her month a company expense because SRSO had no funds to provide health insurance by paying premium themselves. In fact in Bhurkan when asked if health insurance is discontinued, would they like to continue it themselves and there was a resounding response in the affirmative. Health Insurance is now being seen as a \_\_\_\_\_ social protection measure by the people.

Having visited the area where Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) has been operational for less than two years, it was apparent that the core livelihood interventions, namely, social mobilisation, IGG, CIF, VT and health insurance, really pull households out of poverty.

The Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Qaim Ali Shah happened to visit Sukkur and I took the chance of meeting him at the airport on arrival. He was kind enough to sit down with me at the airport lounge. He expressed satisfaction at the progress of SRSO and asked me to see him at Karachi, as he would like to discuss the programme in detail. I was pleased at his interest in the programme and promised to do so as and when it was convenient for the CM.

At Karachi, Rashid, Sono and I met Sindh government officials including Additional Chief Secretary, who promised all support to the programme. Adviser to the Chief Minister Dr. Qaisar Bengali graciously waited for me at Islamabad airport lounge to see me before boarding his flight to Karachi. He very kindly assured me that none of the funds for core livelihood interventions will be diverted for other activities as village rehabilitation project for 43 villages is only going to benefit 5,300 households in Shikarpur and Kashmore districts, whereas the total number of flood affectees in these districts are over 100,000 households. It would, therefore, be prudent to continue support to those whose turn to get VRP may take some time. The Adviser is already negotiating with donors to get resources for 200 villages.

I fully agreed with Dr. Bengali about the benefits and importance of the provision of clear drinking water. The current filtration plants need regular and proper maintenance and about Rs. 500 per day as cost of diesel for the generator. I assured the Adviser that the maintenance side can be taken care of but the recurring cost is beyond the capacity of the communities. It would be desirable to select a low cost recurring expenditure technology for provision of clear drinking water. He promised to look at the Acumen Fund supported technology and asked Dr. Rashid Bajwa to help him in the matter.

I was most grateful and happy at his strong support of the UCBPRP.