

August 31, 1983

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Visit to AKRSP by Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Assistant President, Economic Planning Department, International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Participants: - Management Group
 - Consulting Statistician
 - Project Economist
 - AKRSP/AKF Accountant

The Proceedings

After a lunch which AKRSP had hosted for Mr. Sartaj Aziz (SA) and Mr. Jamil Nishtar, Chairman, Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan, the former came directly to the AKRSP office for a briefing on the programme. During lunch SA had given an ample demonstration of his interest in the programme and a deep understanding of rural development.

SSK outlined AKRSP's orientation, its vision for the future of the area and its attempt to structure its present approach in a manner which would achieve these long term objectives. SSK's presentation was illustrated by appropriate slides of the various aspects of AKRSP's activities.

SA thanked SSK for the presentation and the opportunity to see a programme like AKRSP on the ground. He explained that he had himself been involved in rural development for the last 25 years and he was interested in exploring a model or approach to rural development which could benefit the people at the bottom. The problem was obviously not confined to this area of Pakistan but was a worldwide one. In a majority of the developing countries, the total land available was not enough to support the population. Moreover, whenever one implemented a project whether agricultural or any other those who had land benefitted, those who didn't could not. As a result the income distribution became worse and these people could not even be shifted to the urban areas due to the limited employment opportunities. IFAD had also tried to cater to this target group. The basic conclusion of the 1974 World Food Congress was that the problem was not that there was no food but that the people were too poor to have access to the food. IFAD's mandate was to improve the food situation of the poorest people. IFAD's experience had been that the benefits of a project rarely reached the poor. This experience had held out in projects undertaken in Madagascar and Sudan. The projects were non-replicable and were not oriented towards development when defined as the ability of the people to help themselves. Moreover, the massive induction of foreign experts whose ability to interact with the local nomadic population was zero and did not in anyway contribute to the success of the programmes.

The first conclusion IFAD had drawn in 1979 was very much reflected in AKRSP. The latter was organising its activities around people rather than things. In other words it was identifying a target group asking them their problems and then designing a project in relation to their needs.

The second major conclusion of IFAD was that one could not reach a target group without organising in one form or another. The assessment was that if the income of the target people was 200 per year and a package of inputs, machinery or credit was more than three or four times, their average income, it would not reach the people but would be hijacked on the way by somebody. IFAD had many programmes in which this had happened. Thus the programme had to be packaged in technological terms, in scale terms and in monetary terms in relation to the income level, the technological advancement and the organisational ability of the people.

The third lesson which SA had learnt in these six years was that whatever the people can do themselves, should not be given to the civil servants and whatever the civil servants could do, should not be given to

foreigners. The thing that foreigners could bring seldom benefits to the local people. Foreigners can help in the setting up of industry, fertilizer, making of tractors etc.

These were the basic principles of rural development and were very clearly reflected in AKRSP's approach. The model of this experiment in its first year was very encouraging. However, SA raised the following issues:

- (i) The replicability of this model. Its unique features which could not be replicated and the common ones which could be replicated. The extent to which the programme could be evolved in a manner which would make it more self-sustaining and replicable. Moreover, did the replication of the programme require the level of expertise which AKRSP had an access to or could it be carried out on a more limited administrative and technical ability?
- (ii) Did the VOs have a level of technical ability which would enable them to implement projects themselves? In case the answer was yes, then it would be possible to provide resources to groups and some broad technical support and ask them to implement projects on their own.
- (iii) This question was with regard to the time dimension which AKRSP had in mind. What the VOs do once PPI projects had been exhausted. The experience of the rural population in China was that land development schemes were exhausted after eight to ten years. The important thing would then be to diversify. To what extent were the VOs being prepared for this?
- (iv) The final question was related to the link of VO to the political and administrative hierarchy in the country. At the present stage, the programme was in a rudimentary phase in relation to these issues. However, once these institutions had acquired greater control over physical and human resources, then a political process would be initiated at the grass-root level. How could AKRSP ensure the political nature of the VO? The contradiction in the situation was that to acquire influence and access to resources the positive side of the political spectrum dictated that local leaders should be elected to political positions. On the other side there was a danger that these leaders would get involved in a way which could exert a negative influence in the future. Consequently, did AKRSP see these organisations as a kind of narrow, parallel, selective stream which should short-circuit these influences and somehow keep going or did AKRSP see these as all embracing institutions which would subsume these aspects and acquire a political and administrative personality which the government would eventually accept?

These were all questions which AKRSP has consistently asked itself and is currently involved in trying to find answers for. SSK explained this to SA and on each issue put across the approach which the programme intended to adopt in tackling all the issues. AKRSP did not pretend to have all the answers and hoped that its experience in the field would, in time, provide answers to some. The First and Second (now under issue) Progress Report address themselves to the issues raised by SA and document the progress made so far by AKRSP in this direction.