

July 29, 1984

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Visit of Mrs. Attiya Inayatullah, Adviser to the President of Pakistan on Population Welfare to AKRSP offices accompanied with Mr. Iqbal Ali Mohammad of UNHCR and Mr.S.Faisal Saud, Deputy Commissioner, Gilgit.

Begum Attiya viewed the "Valleys in Transition" and greatly appreciated it. She requested the other visitors to ask questions. The GM talked of the initial difficulty in ascertaining the number of villages. He said that presently AKRSP staff estimates that the project area encompassed 290 villages and to date attempts to organise 245 villages. In response to a question, the GM said that the definition of villages is generally based on interest groups and continuous areas.

The GM said that initially AKRSP would only grant one PPI project, thereafter the savings of VOs would indicate whether a second PPI would be undertaken. He further said that the best way to organise village and strengthen collective effort was through productive schemes similar to what AKRSP was implementing. Once the VO was established, it would be used to garner resources for other sectors such as education and welfare.

Begum Attiya then interjected and gave a discourse of her impressions about AKRSP, her desire of what AKRSP should be doing now and in the future and in what manner should AKRSP cooperate with Government of Pakistan? Her statement covered the following:

1. That AKRSP in its present form should be in this area for at least 15 to 20 years in order that the foundation of AKRSP would be strong and capable of revitalizing and institutionalizing this area.
2. She emphasized the need for AKRSP to cooperate to a much greater extent with local and federal government especially with development agencies such as PARC and ADB. (In addition she believes that the visibility of international agencies should be kept to a minimum)_.
3. She asked if AKRSP has any difficulties in dealing with the administration of the Northern Areas and in what manner it has dealt with the problem?
4. How is AKRSP consolidating the leadership of the elected leaders in the local council and that of President of VOs?
5. What is the cost of the project and subsequently has any cost benefit analysis been done?
6. She asked if AKRSP was introducing appropriate technology for women.
7. Finally she asked if immunization and maternal health programme are being undertaken by AKRSP.

The GM emphasised that AKRSP has initially had to work in the productive sector to develop villages. The vision of the programme, GM stated has been distilled from 150 years world experience in rural development, organising and motivating the individual farmers by integrating them into the development process. GM then elaborated on the extension training effort and its remarkable effectiveness. In addition, the saving programme is an integrated part of the strategy. AKRSP feels it imperative that all villagers must save. The benefits of savings are numerous but one is especially striking. Previously loans to individual villages for the purchase of fertilizer were not available, for the villagers could not offer collateral. However, the VO savings

now used as collateral enable individual farmers to obtain loans. Referring to the local government, GM reiterated that the local council is not a proper platform through which rural development can take place. Citing the example of Panchayat Raj and Mahaweli project, he illustrated how important it is to have a broad based development organisation. GM then explained the responsibilities of SO and the method utilized in organising the village.

Begum Inayatullah asked if it was possible to get briefed on other Aga Khan projected especially those which are geared towards women. In reply to Adviser's question, GM said that these projects have been coordinated through the Ismaili Regional Council, emphasised the added effort being given to women. GM in this regard pointed to the proto-type girls school in Sherqilla.

The Adviser suggested that the GM should institutionalise periodic briefing on AKRSP before the President. The GM should regularly inform him about the progress AKRSP is making and the difficulties it is facing.

The Deputy Commissioner noted, however that there is some unrest because this programme is run by the Aga Khan Foundation which to some people appears to show sectarian overtones. In addition, the geopolitical sensitivity of the area compounded this problem. Besides the outstanding programme of AKRSP tended to pale the achievement of other agencies into insignificance and has become a cause for jealousy and hostility. The GM pointed out that it was not possible to get everybody to understand the programme, however, it was important not to aggravate the situation. The GM hoped that eventually the good will and intentions of the AKRSP effort would be appreciated. The Adviser agreed to this and advised that when a presentation would be made to President and his key ministers, it should be emphasised that AKRSP needs help in this aspect. The DC noted that AKRSP had become a sore point in this area because it serves as an example to the development planners in Islamabad that the AKRSP approach was better than theirs.

The Adviser suggested that an extended presentation should be given to the President incorporating cost comparisons in development efforts of different agencies and indicating the importance of lower level organisations (VOs) below the Union Council.

In conclusion, the Adviser congratulated AKRSP for the work it has undertaken and stressed that development is not the prerogative of the government and any initiative by viable organisations complementary to the government effort, is to be commended.