

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Subject: VISIT OF HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN TO THE AKRSP OFFICES IN GILGIT

Date and

Venue: **May 13, 1983 ... The Conference Room**

Participants: His Highness the Aga Khan
Begum Salima Aga Khan
Prince Aynn Aga Khan
List of other participants is attached.

His Highness the Aga Khan and his entourage arrived at the AKRSP office after a hectic trip to Altit, Hooper, Mohammad Abad and Juglote Sai. The visits to these four villages had been designed to demonstrate the various aspects of AKRSP activity. In particular, the initial stage of the Productive Physical Infrastructure ... PPI (Hooper, Juglote Sai) through to its completion (Altit), the dynamic and evolving process of organising villages and the dissemination of new skills and techniques (Mohammad Abad).

The members of the MG were present to receive His Highness on the gravel footpath from where he was escorted to the General Managers'(GM) office. Meanwhile the members of the entourage and the MG assembled in the conference room. His Highness the aga Khan, the Begum and Prince Aynn were shown in to the conference room by the GM shortly afterwards.

The proceedings began an introduction of the MG by the GM after which members of the MG were invited to make brief presentations on their sphere of activity. The Programme Senior Agriculturist explained the need to upgrade the level of technical knowledge in the area and gave details of the methods employed by AKRSP to achieve this objective. The Programme Senior Engineer outlined the essential details regarding the PPI works. The manner of project selection and preparation of feasibility studies. The Programme Economist touched upon the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the programme.

The discussion (a transcript of the audible parts of the discussion is attached) which followed these presentations, was dominated by His Highness and served to illustrate his over-riding concern with a proper system of evaluating the costs and benefits of the programme. He emphasized the need to obtain early analysis which could be reutilized elsewhere. Another specific question was directed at how the feasibility of projects was determined by AKRSP.

After His Highness' numerous efforts to encourage the members of the Board of Directors to ask questions about the programme, he finally turned to the Minister of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Affairs and other government representatives and invited them to share their perceptions on development of the area. The Minister made some complimentary comments about the programme.

The GM took this opportunity to underline the importance of government cooperation and thanked the government agencies in the area whose efforts had contributed to the success of the programme. The Deputy Commissioner returned the compliment in terming AKRSP a great asset to the district.

Finally, His Highness talked at length about an issue which was very dear to him. Ensuring that communication facilities were available to AkRSP. For this purpose he had taken a unilateral decision in making a helicopter available to AKRSP and he dearly desired that this be used efficiently and reasonably to ensure the success of the work. He was willing to be proven wrong regarding this issue but he would not accept a decision if the helicopter was not being used fully.

The GM pointed out the necessity of the helicopter in view of the difficult terrain. As an example, he mentioned that work which needed three days to complete by jeep, took only five hours by helicopter. Moreover, Chitral district could not be covered without a helicopter.

Mr. Spoelberch took the opportunity to say that he had seen several hundred development projects in different countries around the world but programme that had gotten off to AKRSP's degree of rapid implementation were few. This, he felt, was a tribute to the member of the team and in particular, the leadership of that team. His Highness subscribed wholeheartedly to this view and thanked everybody for an exciting and inspiring visit. He pointed out his expectation that the visit would encourage the people and assured them that they had the support of the highest decision makers behind them.

His Highness was presented an album of photographs which visually demonstrated the Programme Cycle and was invited to inaugurate the Visitors' Book. Soon after the meeting concluded.

List of participants

From Pakistan: - Lt. General Jamal Said Mian, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Affairs.
Major General Pir Dad Khan, Martial Law Administrator, Zone 'E'.
Brig. Safdar Ali, Director General, Northern Areas Works Organization (NAWO).
Mr. Badrul Islam, Deputy Commissioner, Gilgit.
Lt. Col. Nasir, Deputy Chief of Protocol.
Mr. Ramzan Merchant, Chairman, AKRSP BOD.
Mr. Hakim Feerasta, Executive Officer, AKF Pakistan.
Mr. Hamidullah Baig, Member AkRSP BOD.

From Geneva: Mr. Michael Curtis
Mr. Guillaume de Spoelberch
Mr. Robert Shaw
Mr. Ward Henevald

From AKRSP: Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, General Manager
Mr. Hussain Wali Khan, PSE
Mr. Hasan Mehdi Naqvi, PSA
Mr. Tariq Hussain, PE
Mr. Mutabiat Shah, PA
Mr. Ali Dad, POM
Mr. Maliha Hamid Hussein, Programme Officer

TRANSCRIPT OF DISCUSSIONS HELD DURING HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN'S VISIT TO AKRSP OFFICE IN GILGIT

After the formal presentation by the PSE, the PSA and the PE, the following discussions took place:

His Highness (HH) When will we start getting cost-benefit information of a definitive form out of our projects. We have 168 projects in the pipeline ... at what stage do you expect to start getting information to show that the cost-benefit figures that we had worked out before the projects were implemented, had been converted into effective cost benefit figures after implementation.

Tariq Husain (TH) Your Highness, we wait for the implementation to start before we go ahead with the baseline surveys, we do not want people to say to us well, here come the Survey Wallas again (laughter) so that is important to us. So as projects are completed, we will start the survey process and from there on the tentative estimates could be ready for any specific project. I would say within 15 days to 30 days. The constraint right now is not in gathering data but in analysing it.

HH When will that analysis start becoming meaningful for the programme as a whole?

TH You mean when will the reports be available.

HH Yes, when will the reports on the earliest projects start coming out and becoming valid material to reutilize elsewhere?

TH I would say not longer than three months and in that I include one month of Ramzan.

HH Three months?

TH ... from today.

HH Three months from today.

TH Yes. By the time the next Board meeting of AKRSP.

HH We have cost benefit ideas. Cost benefits of the early projects?

TH Yes.

HH I have another question to ask. In another programme, we found that projects which caught public opinion, so to speak, suddenly start multiplying like mushrooms from village to village without necessarily being sound projects because there has been a management oversight. Has this happened to any of the projects that you have had so far. Have you found villages suddenly launching projects of their own without consultations?

General Not really Sir. What has happened in our case is Manager (GM)that the whole process starts with the diagnostic survey so out of the 118 villages that we have visited, 111 villages identified the projects. Then we go in for the second dialogue in which we start preparing cost estimates, and feasibility reports. One village I will mention Sir, there is a canadian team, A CIDA team was invited. We were very interested that we should take them to a village where there should be a viable project. We took them to a village where they identified a project and we found that it was not feasible. So we went back and said that this can't be done. Now this has happened in two or three other villages and villagers have accepted the views of our experts. In this way there is an inbuilt mechanism whereby we preclude and exclude projects which are not feasible. Of course, there is the problem as I mentioned to you Sir, people say "why don't you come to our villages what have we done that you are going elsewhere and not coming to us".

HH How do you stop that?

GM Well we stop that by telling them that it is not humanly possible for us to come to 200 villages at the same time and we only prepare our work plan according to the

resources available. We have a work plan now according to which we can undertake on an average, depending on which scenario we are working, from 5 to 9 infrastructure works every month. So that will very clearly spell out that these are the schemes we can do in this amount. As far as credit needs are concerned, we know how much the bank is prepared to lend us. We are now going to come up with half a million request if they agree then that will mean that we can lend out to that many number of villages which that money will cover. So, in a way Sir only those schemes are implemented which not only villagers identify as their first priority but which have been surveyed and found from the cost-benefit point of view beneficial and feasible.

- HH Where is Mr. Shaw? He is not here. Is he hiding?
- GM He is always in the background. He does all the work but in the best radiation remains in the background.
- Robert Shaw (RS) (Emerging from the Press Section).
Actually, trying to find some coffee for Your Highness (Laughter).
- HH Are there any questions you had to ask?
- RS I actually had the good fortune of spending a week here last week and asked a great amount, possibly more than my fair share of questions.
- GM They are always very helpful and perceptive questions.
- HH Most of these are people involved in the programme. I think we should ask His Excellency whether he has any stingers he wants to throw under the table.
- Minister of KA & NA Well, I've only seen the project today and I think besides the physical benefits that will accrue they will do a lot of integration and coordination I don't know the resources. I don't know the plans but I think it's wonderful.
- HH Does the government have any perceptions which it would like to share with us?
- Minister Well I think ... I would say even though I'm new to the work there seems tremendous scope in it for the future.
- GM Sir, I must mention here that without the support of government institutions, the programme would not have made such progress. It was possible only under the patronage of the MLA, the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner is here. The administration has been extremely supportive of our effort. We work in close collaboration with them with the Commissioner and with the Additional Commissioner (Development). We exchange plans with them. We tell them where we are, what we are doing and of course we are putting together a portfolio of projects which we hope that in terms of rural development and in terms of micro level projects which we undertake in conjunction with the LB&RD Department would provide an excellent ground for collaboration.
- Certainly, I feel that each of these projects be jointly implemented because we can provide them the technical expertise, because we have that, we can also provide them the implementation expertise because we have people in the field. I think the Deputy Commissioner might like to say something because he has been associated with our work and he has been going to these places.

Deputy
(DC) I think, we have, Your Highness been probably unduly Commissioner flattered (laughter). We do try to help but it's Mr. Shoaib Sultan's charismatic personality itself which has done the trick. As far as the administration is concerned, I think it is great asset for the district and I'm sure for the place itself and we try to sort out the small issues and conflicts that arise on account of diametrically opposed rural development programme operating in this area. So far we have successfully handled the issues.

HH So you don't have any questions you would like to raise now ... I think at the beginning of a programme, it is very useful that one benefits from everybody's comments and views and people's perceptions on what is being done and how its being done. What might be done better or what might be done differently. Bill and the others in the Foundation and I like listening to what people have to say. They have really, the greatest contributions to make.

DC I think there were issues that we have and from time to time we managed to solve them at our level and I think there remains no major questions from my side.

GM When there are major projects we refer them to agencies like Northern Areas Works Organization (NAWO).

HH It would be interesting to know about them/

Director
General
NAWO, (DG) NAWO's projects have a slightly bigger size, there are schools, the other major projects are in the field of power, electric generation and roads.

HH And now the Directors of the Company perhaps you want to comment. I see one or two around the table. Any comments.

... (Mr. Hamidullah Baig made some comments regarding the commendable work of AKRSP. These could not be reproduced as the speaker had his back towards the tope recorder and AKRSP has as yet not been able to get its own audio-visual equipment, which is on order).

HH Well, I think it's been a very, very useful exercise for me to see some of the projects and to understand the way they are put together. I have a feeling that there are two areas which need attention. The first is the direction of the programme. The sense I had today and perhaps its unwise as it is on the basis of the sense of one day but nevertheless I think, these micro-projects which have a direct impact on village life and perhaps that is something we all ought to think more about. I think the other area is perhaps economic development where there is a lot to do.

AKRSP tends to generate hopefully a lot of activity. And to do that one has to define the natural outlet in terms of the economic benefits to the area. The last point really would be the coordination with other programmes like those of Central Health and Education Boards. We can discuss that in Karachi but coordinating the activities of these groups is important. So that we understand what they are doing and so that their programmes would be mutually supportive and the last comment which has got nothing to do with AKRSP but nonetheless affects everybody's efficiency. I dearly desire that piece of equipment should be flying. I dearly desire. I think its a decision that was rather unilateral in introducing this equipment and I am ore than happy to be proven wrong if that equipment is being used. If its sitting on the ground, then its no use. It has to help people to get to the remoter areas. To see for

themselves what is going on. Talk to the people. Its not possible to run these programmes on the strength of capital intensive equipment alone. I have a lot of difficulty explaining to people that the cost is there, in any event, whether the equipment flies or not. The additional cost is not much and so I would ask that this equipment be used. Not irrationally, not improperly but used continuously for the purpose of the programme. i feel very strongly about this. I think so much can be achieved in this programme if communication is assured. That is the basic premise of the programme and if you want to keep the Head Office team small, they have got to be efficient. They have to be able to move around. I know that people are cost conscious and they come to me and say on one side you have this very expensive piece of equipment and on the other side you are cost conscious and in fact we can achieve both objectives. I know there are people who will challenge that and I am willing to be proven wrong but I am not going to be proven wrong if the equipment is not used. The Directors of the Company are here. Ramzan, you have something to do with it. Let us try and ensure it is used.

GM It would be very unfortunate if it goes. Many people ware sceptical about the helicopter including myself. I am the one who has used it the most for about 35 hours which again is not enough but I think it is really very useful in accelerating out the cost estimates and cost benefits to see how much the pace of development has been accelerated through its use and one problem Sir is it has to be based in Gilgit.

HH I mentioned to the General that may be there was some area where we could look together at having in Gilgit fuel, may be spare parts. I'm not saying large number of spare parts but sufficient spare parts available. Simple pieces of equipment so when it is out of operation, we don't have to fly to Islamabad. When its here it can fly consistently. The other think I would say is that if we can combine the visits with outer institutions so that all the people working in the area, can use it together if we add up the costs and compare them with what they would be if they want by road. But it has got to be well used. I think its an exercise we ought to try and live through and make it a success. If its a failure we can say its a failure. I'm quite happy to hear that but not any comments before having done what was really needed to be done.

GM As an example Sir, what took me three days before, by helicopter, it too exactly 5 hours. Without the helicopter, Chitral is impossible. With the helicopter I won't have been able to go to the Chitral before June or involve the government functionaries in the programme and what we achieved in three days, would have taken weeks.

HH I hear that people in the Foundation feel that it is a bee in my bonnet they might even say it is a helicopter in my bonnet. In any case its an issue to which I attach importance rightly or wrongly.

GM The Management Group is behind you Sir. (Laughter).

Guillaume de Spoelberch Sir, I just speak from the position of somebody who has seen may be several hundred development projects, start in different countries around the world but I think there are few I've seen that have gotten off to this degree of rapid implementation with results coming in very shortly after the team is established in the field. I think its a tribute to the members of the team and the leadership of that team and I think that we are very fortunate here to have that team (applause).

HH I would like to subscribe wholeheartedly to that and to thank every body for organising my visit today. A most exciting and most inspiring visit and I hope that it will encourage people to feel that there is all the way to the highest decision makers

full support to them and I think that is something you should feel confident of and not only the implementation but the policy thinking behind it. I feel that is something to depend on and I think the government departments should know that and the people working with the programme, should know that because it is a source of great satisfaction to me.

GM

Sir, may I ask Miss Maliha to present an album to you.

HH

Oooh lovely. "Valleys in Transition" that lovely.

His Highness was invited to sign the visitors book and shortly afterwards the meeting ended.