

Speech at Formal Inaugural of MediBank Trust

October 12, 2015

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan

Hon'ble President of Pakistan
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen!

I am deeply touched by Patron-in-Chief MediBank Trust Mr. Javaid Nisar Syed for bestowing me the honour of speaking at the Formal Inaugural of MediBank Trust by the President of Pakistan.

From amongst civil servants of the Sub-continent, the most illustrious example who served humanity is my mentor Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan. I learnt all about serving the rural poor at his feet over forty years during 62 years of my working life, of which 25 years were spent in the Civil Service of Pakistan. He would always advise build your own island irrespective of the environment around you. Hopefully that island will multiply. I got first opportunity to build an island in a village Japuka in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral in 1982. Today in India and Pakistan, there are over 20 million rural households, over 100 million population, who got inspired by that island. The inspiration was much faster in India because the Andhra Pradesh government adopted it and took it to scale and secondly I worked only with women there.

Despite his stature and work, when in 1983 someone asked Akhter Hameed Khan why his wonderful work did not spread like wildfire. His response was "is it my mistake that in forty years I have been able to find only one disciple who truly follows me". He was adamant in saying "you don't replicate programmes, you replicate people".

I followed his advice but in Pakistan, I could persuade only two DMG officers, Dr. Rashid Bajwa and Dr. Amjad Saqib to truly understand what I was advocating and leaving the service practicing it. It was another matter that I was lucky in finding many

more outside the service, who have now created a cadre of over 12,000 professionals in Pakistan to replicate the Rural Support Programmes countrywide. In India, I had no difficulty in finding IAS officers who readily espoused the approach of Social Mobilisation and took it to scale.

When I was introduced to Javaid Nisar Syed a few months back by my friend Saleem Ranjha, another mad person in pursuit of serving humanity. I had no idea what Javaid had accomplished in such a short period. I do hope and pray like Akhter Hameed Khan's island, his initiative would multiply and Government of Pakistan will help him to take it to scale serving the multitude of suffering humanity.

I can see a large number of my service colleagues, past and present, in the audience. Let me confess without the civil service experience, I would never have been able to do what I did in 37 years of my post-civil service period. Not only the experience, which no other service in the world would have given me, but the support in my post service work by my past and present service colleagues, I keep on getting. That is an advantage which makes others in the field very jealous. I can't possibly name all of them, the list is too long all my batch mates, all the civil service and foreign service probationers of 1964 to 1968 batches, all the Commissioners and Chief Secretaries who served in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral during my 12 years stay there. Kunwar Idris who as Deputy Commissioner Karachi in 1971 when I was Commissioner, gave me all support in every crisis. Ejaz Rahim who as Cabinet Secretary, got me Hilal-i-Imtiaz and all my young service colleagues who go out of their way to help me if I ever need help, even without asking. It is indeed this help and support which facilitated the work I am doing with the communities.