

Speech at National CDD Conference

**By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
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Hon'ble Adviser to Prime Minister/Federal Minister Sartaj Aziz,
Hon'ble Minister MNA Marvi Memon, Chairperson BISP,
His Excellency Ambassador of European Union,
Honoured Guests from India Mr. Vijay Mahajan, Founder of Basix Group
& Sampat Kumar, IAS, Secretary to Chief Minister Meghalaya State
Respected Secretary Economic Affairs Division Mr. Tariq Bajwa,
Fauzia Bibi of LSO Chirah,
Distinguished Guests

Very few people probably know that Mr. Sartaj Aziz is one of the architects of IFAD and an author of the first book on Chinese Communes. Above all, he has been the most ardent supporter of the Rural Support Programmes. It gives me special pleasure in welcoming him this morning. I have rarely come across politicians who could grasp the nuances of the Social Mobilisation strategy as Marvi Memon did after a single field visit having interaction with organised rural women of Sindh. I am so happy that despite insurmountable difficulties of obtaining no objection, visa and travel, Vijay Mahajan and Sampath Kumar are amidst us today. Vijay is one of the leading lights on the Indian Civil Society horizon. I have known Sampath over last 15 years. Despite being an IAS officer his love is to work at the grassroots helping the poor. Federal Secretaries are very busy officials, I am particularly grateful to Tariq Bajwa for finding the time to join us. His Excellency the European Union Ambassador is gracing us with his presence the third time in a short period of 4 weeks after Peshawar and Karachi events, which speaks volumes of his and EU's commitment to Community Driven Development (CDD). The presence of Fauzia Sahiba representing the Local Support Organisation is of special satisfaction to me.

The Community Driven Development (CDD) phrase was coined by the World Bank but the concept had its roots in 19th Century Europe practiced by Germany, France and Denmark and it was the mayor of a small principality in Germany named Raiffeissen,

who described it in three development principles of Organisation, Capital Formation and Human Skills Upgradation. The concept was propagated in South Asia by Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan, when he initiated the Comilla Project, in the then East Pakistan now Bangladesh in 1959. I had the privilege of learning the concept from him and in 1982 applying it to Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gilgit, Baltistan and Chitral.

My Mentor Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK) used to explain that the Administrative Pillar (from President to Patwari) and the Political Pillar (from National Assembly to Village Councils) are not enough for economic and social empowerment of the rural poor of the country. He used to advocate a Socio-Economic Pillar or a Social Pillar to complement the Administrative and Political Pillars to reach each and every rural poor household because poverty is at the household level and without economic empowerment of each household, poverty cannot be eliminated. Fauzia Bibi will explain what this Pillar is capable of achieving.

On the request of Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Geneva, the Operations Evaluation Division (OED) of the World Bank agreed to assess AKRSP's impact every five years. In their first evaluation in 1987, the World Bank evaluators declared that the first four years of AKRSP are the missed four years of most Rural Development programmes, including Bank funded, because unlike AKRSP, a blue print approach took precedence over a process approach followed by AKRSP. What struck the evaluators, as most impressive was the primacy of the village organisations in the eyes of the implementers of AKRSP. In their second evaluation, the World Bank concluded that in real terms the incomes of the million people residing in the programme area had more than doubled in ten years.

The OED of the World Bank does not evaluate programmes and projects where Bank financing is not involved. They accepted AFK Geneva's request to assess AKRSP because the concept AKRSP was implementing seemed to them novel and innovative. The two evaluations of AKRSP convinced the Bank of the effectiveness of the approach

in poverty reduction. The Vice President of the World Bank for South Asia Dr. Meiko Nishimuzi was so impressed after the visit to AKRSP that she initiated a programme for the Sector Managers of her Division called VIP, which stands for Village Immersion Programme and sent groups of Bank staff for a two weeks VIP in different parts of Pakistan and South Asia.

At her wish in 1999, I took her to Andhra Pradesh in India, where I was implementing the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) funded by UNDP New York. After spending a few days in the villages of Andhra, she declared to Andhra State Government that she had seen “UNDP’s Miracle” achieved through SAPAP and offered Bank support, if the State would like to expand the programme Statewide. On State request, the World Bank stepped in 2000 in the shoes of SAPAP, when it phased out and set up a similar organisation called Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) and took the 100,000 households organised by SAPAP to 11 million households throughout the length and breadth of Andhra Pradesh. The latest evaluation done by the World Bank of SERP in 2015, acknowledged the influence of SAPAP and Pakistan’s Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in the following words:

“The origins of Bank programmes lie in India’s women’s savings-and-loan association and the UNDP supported South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme which grew out of the 1993 Dhaka Declaration for the eradication of poverty. These approaches were also based on experience elsewhere in South Asia, including the Rural Support Programmes in Pakistan ...”

“In India, during the decade prior to appraisal, there was an increasing concern about the failure of antipoverty programs to reduce the number of rural poor. There were a number of problems with these programmes including poor targeting, weak management, lack of complementarities and wasteful subsidies.

“ Strengthening and building institutions for the poor including self-help groups and federated groups at the village and mandal level was needed to establish the platform for support. There were alternative options to women’s self-help groups, for example a program of conditional cash transfer or a stronger government safety net. However, neither would have enhanced women’s empowerment at scale with potential for sustainability”.

In Pakistan for the last 33 years, I am hoping for the Andhra miracle to happen in my country. The closest I came to achieving this dream was in 1992 when the World Bank

Second Evaluation Report came out about AKRSP and I was also given the Magsaysay Award by the President of Philippines. I was summoned from Gilgit to Islamabad by the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and asked to formulate a countrywide AKRSP replication programme. With full support of the Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz, a ten billion rupee programme was approved and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) was set up with Rs. 500 million endowment with the assurance of six monthly instalments of the same amount for next ten years. Unfortunately the government changed and the dream remained unfulfilled.

Sporadic and ad hoc grants to RSPs continued and setting up of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in 2000 helped to some extent , the expansion and replication of RSPs currently covering nearly 25% of rural households in the country but none of the RSPs got resources for a holistic programme like AKRSP or SERP in Andhra Pradesh.

However, in 2008 after a presentation before Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, resources for a holistic programme in two districts of Sindh Province, namely Shikarpur and Kashmore-Kandhkot were sanctioned through Union Council based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP). On the basis of my experience in India, I submitted to the Chief Minister that UCBPRP will work with women only. It took him by surprise but he did allow me to go ahead.

UCBPRP was given resources for four years only and a maintenance grant, when suddenly out of blue, I got a call that the EU Development Counsellor wanted to see me. Mr. Brend de Groot asked me if I could arrange for him to meet the officials of the Sindh Government. We were lucky that even the Chief Minister agreed to see him. In the meeting, an offer was made by the Counsellor to replicate UCBPRP in eight more districts of Sindh only if the government wishes so and would consider covering the remaining districts in the Province under the ADP funding. The Chief Minister appreciated the offer and accepted it. Within the current financial year, the Province of Sindh would have 18 districts out of 24 implementing CDD programmes.

The EU team which is piloting the SUCCESS programme is a dream team in our eyes. RSPs could not have asked for a more supportive, understanding and committed persons. We are also greatly indebted to Economic Affairs Division for facilitating approval of EU funded support to Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS). The presence of Secretary Economic Affairs Division this morning is a demonstration of that support.