

**By:- Shoaib Sultan Khan**

**Subject:- Speech at Launch of Balochistan Rural Development & Community Empowerment Programme on November 10, 2017 at Quetta**

I am most grateful to the Hon'able Ministers, MNAs, Senators and MPAs

Ambassador European Union and Secretary Baluchistan Government and the distinguished ladies and gentlemen

For honoring us by their presence here this evening. The CEO BRSP Nadir Gul wants me to talk about the journey of Rural Support Programmes which began in December 1982 at Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral with the lunch of Agha Khan Rural Support Programme by His Highness the Agha Khan.

It was in late eighties that I had the good fortune of two visitors, one German from Pak German Project of Baluchistan and the other was Director USAID. The German Advisor was in search of home to make Pak German project sustainable and Director USAID was so impressed by achievements of AKRSP that he offered to replicate it in another province if the province so desired. I was visited to Quetta and had many meetings and also a workshop to explain the strategy and organization of AKRSP. Finally the govt. of Baluchistan and the German Donors agreed to adopt the AKRSP model and Baluchistan Rural Support Programme was registered as a non for profit joint stock company with an independent and autonomous support organization with the Chief Secretary Poonegar as Chairman, in his personal capacity. In the then NWFP now KP, Sarhad Rural Support Programme was born in 1989 with funding from USAID.

This mode of replication of AKRSP got a real boost when the Prime Minister in 1992 approved setting up of a country wide National Rural Support Programme, which was followed by WAPDA and World Bank approving establishment of an RSP for NRSP gave an endowment of Rs. 200 million to its HRD Division and

created an independent to subsidiary Institute of Rural Management and all RSPs joined to set up an RSPN with funding from DFID, in 2001.

The affectees of Ghazi Brotha Hydro Project, the Chief Minister of Punjab approved a Punjab Rural Support Programme in 1998, a local NGO in Thardeep adopted AKRSP and converted itself into Thardeep Rural Development Programme in 1999, the Govt. of Sindh set up the Sindh Rural Support Organization in 2003 and the AJK govt. followed suit in 2007 with setting up of AJK Rural Support Programme.

Over the last 35 years of my journey of grassroots development through AKRSP and its replications amazes me when I still find community Policy Makers including Politicians and Administrators, Academics, Donors, Private sector and people at large having misconceptions as to the core function of RSPs. Why should the Federal and Provincial Govts which have a Plethora of Ministers, Departments, Corporations etc why do they not only set up RSPs but also endow them with endowments and grants. Even going to the extent of Federal Govt. setting up the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund to ensure sustainable flow of funds to RSPs amongst others.

The explanation is very simple which of course I had the privilege and good fortune of learning from one of the greatest Social Scientist Akhter Hameed Khan whom I met in the then East Pakistan in 1959. He prescribed that the two prevalent Pillars of state the Political and the Administrator have no access to each and every household of the country, Province, district, Tehsil, Thana or even the Union Council what to say of the villages. He advocated sitting up of a third Pillar which he used to call the Socio-economic Pillar or Social Pillar. Poverty and impoverishment is at the household level. If govt. services and supplies or of others do not reach them their livelihood cannot be improved. Rural Support Programmes foster a frame work of grassroots institutions to enable each and every household to access services and supplies. In this process they also help unleash the potential of the people with individually and collectively when they federate in higher levels of their organizations likes community organization of 15.25 households federating.

