

## NOTE FOR RECORD

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Subject: Visit to Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP)

Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) had a most chequered progress I first heard of its precursor Pak-German Project in late 80s from the German Consultants to the Project when they visited me in Gilgit to see AKRSP. On their invitation, I made a few visits to Balochistan and held training sessions with the project field staff, visited many of their field areas and interacted with the officials of the Provincial government and management staff of the Project. The German Consultants felt greatly enamoured of the independent and autonomous structure of the AKRSP and I helped them in converting the Pak-German Project into a Section 42 not for profit joint stock company and christened it as the Balochistan Rural Support Programme.

Thereafter, I lost touch with BRSP but I was happy to hear about the good progress BRSP was making. Azmat Isa took it to new heights and then things started going wrong for BRSP. It saddened me immensely because by now RSP family had grown and BRSP was very much part of the family. Anything happening to one member of the family, could not leave the others unaffected.

Luckily Shahida Jaffrey shifted to Quetta and offered her services to BRSP gratis to revive it. She persuaded me to visit Quetta and my heart sank to see the plight of BRSP. A vibrant thriving organization was in a state indescribable decadence. Shahida with BRSP's two faithfuls Tahir and Amin were there. All three giving their time and energy without any remunerations but determined to revive BRSP. I met the Governor, the Chief Minister and the officials trying to muster support but not to much avail. At the time of my departure, Tahir presented me a Thank You card which touched me immensely and I only wished I could do something to revive BRSP.

I went to Kamal Hyat and requested for PPAF support to revive BRSP. Azmat Isa had also by now joined the World Bank. Kamal agreed to give a chance to BRSP as a very special case. Shahida and her staff tried their very best to make most productive use of the PPAF grant. The Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) helped BRSP in every possible way even stationing its specialists like Feroz Shah, Mutahir Shah for

long periods at Quetta. Shandana and Rashid agreed to come on the Board of BRSP and Shandana did everything possible from RSPN for BRSP.

On one of my visits to Quetta, Chief Minister Jan Mohammad Jamali even approved an endowment for BRSP. Before the proposal could materialize, the government was changed. BRSP lost Shahida Jaffrey as the Governor selected her to be the Vice Chancellor of the newly set up Balochistan Women University. Shahida had already given enough of her time and energy with initial two years gratis and I encouraged her to accept the new assignment to which she brought unparalleled credit and distinction.

The challenge for BRSP, as for all other RSPs, has been how to find a suitable CEO. The other RSPs and RSPN thrives only because of this one factor. BRSP's PPAF support started dwindling because of its dismal performance in credit although PPAF was all praise for its achievements in CPI. Since PPAF operational support is directly linked with the quantum of programmes implemented, BRSP's credit failure again made it vulnerable.

Fortunately for BRSP, the Prime Minister's Livestock Project came to its rescue and provided it the much needed resources for social mobilisation. BRSP expanded its coverage to four more districts besides PPAF supported one district.

However, the most significant event was selection of Nadir Gul Barech as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of BRSP, thanks to generous support by RSPN. Kamal Hyat also agreed to support three posts of professionals at the management level. Nadir Gul came and spent a week with us at Chitral.

This was my first visit after Nadir Gul's taking over as CEO BRSP. The transformation in BRSP that he has brought about had to be seen to be believed. The BRSP premises has a most functional look and a most professional working environment with aesthetic surroundings. For the first time, I found the Board papers and the reports done in a professional manner. My joy found no bound at the developments at BRSP and the dinner hosted by Nadir on the lawn of the office, reflected the self sustainability being strived by BRSP. For once I felt very confident of the future of BRSP and Shandana and RSPN can justifiably feel satisfied that all the resources and hard work they put in BRSP, has bore fruits. The one person who

brought about this laudable transformation is Nadir Gul, of course, ably supported by the Chairman BRSP Sardar Naseer Tareen, Vice Chairman Kamal and the members of the Board.

Our meeting with the Chief Minister dwelt on the Union Plan prepared by Nadir. I submitted to the CM the crying need to bring on an average 722 poor and poorest families out of 1128 families living in each of 567 Union Councils in the 30 districts of Balochistan, out of poverty. The approach spelled out social mobilisation of 722 families per UC as the foundation to deliver community investment fund (CIF), micro credit, vocational training for employment for at least one sibling of each of the 722 families and employment guarantee to wage labourers and unemployed adults in each UC through at least one CPI in each village every year. The CM and the officials of the government of Balochistan listened to us and on the suggestion of a Provincial Minister, CM approved the proposal for Planning Department to sit down with BRSP and come up with a detailed Union Plan for consideration of the CM and his cabinet.

Next day we took an early start and stopped at Qila Saifullah to meet over 200 Presidents and Managers of the QS Region. The meeting was attended by the District Nazim and the DCO. The District Nazim who had visited AKRSP fully supported BRSP approach and exhorted the people to follow it to the letter and spirit.

Sardar Tareen has been talking about Torghar since I first met him. Today he was taking us there. On the way we stopped at BRSP field unit at Sharan Jogezei. It was a most functional unit in physical terms and I hope all BRSP SOUs are similarly organized. The field staff, of course, needs to be trained sooner than later. In fact training of field staff should be made a prerequisite before posting them in the field. Similarly training and orientation of presidents and managers (LMST) of the newly formed community organisations should be given the highest priority. Without this training much more harm would be done to the programme. It is better to delay the initiation of the programme till trained staff is in place then to commence programme activities in a slipshod manner. Despite these constraints, the unit seemed to have done very well in coverage of households as organized COs. The RPM Isa Khan Kakar seemed most motivated and totally immersed in his work. I have no doubt he would make a success of the Region.

The other thorny issue was bringing women in an organised fold otherwise BRSP would not even be able to reach them what to say of doing anything for them. BRSP needs an out of the box solution of this challenge. If there is the will, there is always a way. I am sure Nadir will give his personal attention to this challenge.

The Livestock Clinic seemed very well stocked including the presence of a DVM from the province of Sindh. It seems to be fulfilling a much needed facility. The Torghar Project staff seemed highly appreciative of the work done under PMLSP.

Finally we reached our El Dorado at Torghar abode of the Suleman Markhoor and the Ibex, where Sardar Naseer Tareen has built his little paradise not only for humans but also for majestic animals of the wild. We had a comprehensive briefing on the work done by Torghar Conservation Project (TCP) and the subsequent projects initiated as a sequel to the success of TCP. It is most impressive and a shining example of Parks and People. In fifteen years, the number of animals increased more than thirty fold, literally from extinction to survival. From 100 animals of each species to 3500 now. But what is of great significance is the involvement of the community of 264 households. Sardar Tareen has not only saved the animals but through trophy hunting earned nearly US\$ 1.7 million for the people, giving them full health cover and enabling initiation of many physical infrastructure projects. It is a demonstration worth emulation by all conservationists and lovers of wildlife.

My batchmate and friend Bashir Ahmad who spent a long time in the sixties serving as political agent in Balochistan in different districts highly praised Sardar Sahib's efforts and achievements and warmly invited Sardar Tareen to come to Hazara Area for a similar initiative.

It was a memorable visit made most comfortable and enjoyable by Sardar Sahib's hospitality and Nadir Gul's drawing up an excellent programme of field visits and making faultless logistical and travel arrangements.

With Bashir and Shandana to keep company and Shandana's treasure trove of classical, semi classical, instrumental music both western and oriental and a galaxy of songs of yester years and modern singers made the negotiating of difficulty hilly roads totally bearable despite Bashir's grumbings of and on he seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the trip. Being an old hand in Balochistan, he proved of immense value to me.

I do hope Kamal Hyat would pay a visit to BRSP and feel gratified that how his initial support to BRSP has helped the organization turn into an institution of which the entire RSP family feels proud of.