

Report

Round Table Discussion

Improving Avenues of Assistance for the vulnerable in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Monday March 03, 2014

Abbreviations, Acronyms, & Glossary

RAHA	Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
P & DD	Planning and Development Department
SDPI	Social Policy Development Institute
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Province)
UC	Union Council
DC	Deputy Commissioner
NPD	National Project Director
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NCC	National Cadet Corps
BHU	Basic Health Unit
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
MPA	Member Provincial Assembly
RTI	Right to Information
PHED	Public Health Engineering Department
Khwendo kor	The Pushto term means "Sisters Home". This a national NGO

A round table discussion titled “Improving Avenues of Assistance for the vulnerable in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa” was held by the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas programme (RAHA) of the UNDP and KP Planning and Development Department (P & DD) at Pearl Continental hotel Peshawar on Monday March 03, 2014.

The event was formally open with the welcome remarks by Mr. Arshad Majeed, National Programme Director (NPD) RAHA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr. Vaqar Ahmad, Deputy, Executive Director SDPI, spoke on the research study on Social Protection in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan titled “Avenues of Assistance for the Vulnerable”. He spoke on social insurance and assistance programs in the two provinces.

With Ms. Bushra Gohar, former chair, National Assembly Standing Committee on Women Development, as the moderator the event was attended by a wide array of people from the government and civil society and addressed by a number of people including:

1. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Special Advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.
2. Mian Iftikhar Hussain, Leader Awami National Party (ANP) and Former Minister for Information, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.
3. Dr. Anoosh W Khan, Department of Gender Studies at Peshawar University.
4. Ms. Mariam Bibi, Development Practitioner and Executive Director national NGO Khwendo Kor.
5. Mr. XX Deputy Commissioner, district Dir Lower, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.
6. Mr. Zaheer Ul Islam Deputy Commissioner district Peshawar, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa
7. Mr. XX DC district Nowshera, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa.

List of the participants is attached.

Provision of Social Services:

There was a marked refrain about the lack of any mention of the partnership of civil society in the social insurance and assistance programmes by Dr. Vaqar in his presentation about the study. Many participants were of the view that it considered only government social protection schemes. Other also questioned the lack of any efforts to define vulnerability as this was important to target vulnerability. To this the RAHA team responded with the explanation that not only vulnerable groups but deserving UCs were clearly defined under the RAHA program. However, extensive discussion of vulnerable groups and vulnerability to ascertain the groups and the nature of vulnerability followed.

Participants mentioned gaps in rights and services for women, children, and labour. The participants shared that children could be seen missing education, begging, loitering in streets, scavenging, and doing labour. Some lamented the plight of labour and the protection of their rights. It was highlighted that those in the informal sector were especially at a disadvantage. Most labour was unskilled which increased their vulnerability. On the other hand an improved skill level could not only improve the plight of labour but also effect marked change in the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable. This could also improve the national income and prosperity. Some of the participants refrained about the lack of an important need such as water despite the fact that the area was producing gas.

Most speakers and participants agreed that stakeholders should make synergistic and concerted efforts to find solutions to the social dilemma by way of assuming responsibility and managing these affairs in indigenous resources. It was also highlighted that the civil society should be stimulated through character building and wide ranging awareness inputs to assume social responsibility and establish all due rights for the poor and vulnerable. They agreed that there should be meaningful and demand driven response in education, health, livelihood, human and natural resources. The government and civil society should have an improved focus on the provision of essential social services such as education, health, livelihood through the establishment of fully equipped schools, BHUs, water supply schemes, social protection schemes, and livelihood opportunities right at

their doorstep. They also agreed that privation also caused of extremism therefore it was important to make all essential services without hassle.

There was also the point that far too much negativity surrounds the NGOs at the grassroots which pose great problem to their good work. All efforts must be undertaken to raise awareness and remove the negative perception of foreign agenda and corruption associated with NGOs. To do this media could be used to remove this perception.

Some participants also raised the issue of lack of proper information dissemination about the activities of RAHA.

Participation of Women in Development:

Most participants recognized that women were the most important and significant of all vulnerable groups representing more than 50 percent of the population. Therefore there was a most forceful support for the development of women. Speakers and participants also stressed the need for the participation of women in development programmes. Most speakers and participants agreed that traditionally there is little participation of women in planning and management of grassroots programmes which has placed women at a disadvantage.

However, it was realized that RAHA is working to improve this imbalance. The RAHA team explained that the programme was working to bring women to the mainstream of development through a variety of activities. These include the participation of at least xx women in XX community organizations, including x women only organizations, across six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. By virtue of the fact they are being given opportunity to participate in the planning and management of schemes that affect their lives. At least x women have been provided skills to improve their livelihoods. These women indentified at least X water supply and sanitation schemes and a variety of women specific schemes including improvement of girls schools, MCH centres, and community centers. And the most important of RAHA intervention has been the relative change in the mentality of men to allow their women to participate in public life in their own interest.

Volunteerism in Social Work:

The speakers and participants emphasized the importance of volunteerism in social work. In this regard the role of media, especially of social media which is in use by the youth, was emphasized for stimulation. There was a great need to mobilize the youth and involve the students. It was suggested that they can be incentivized through stipends and similar things. Reference to the National Cadet Corps (NCC) programme was made to underscore that it could be used as an incentive to stimulate youth for social work and volunteerism. The crux of the point was the institutionalization of volunteerism in social work.

Gap of Policies and Legislation:

Speakers and participants agreed that there were serious problems regarding policies and legislation. The clarity regarding policies and legislation was creating too many problems in due response to social problems. This was explained through the example of the laws and policies regarding Internally Displaced people (IDPs) & refugees. Legislation and policies were characterized by shortsightedness and quick fixes. The need to formulate long-term policies was underscored. Some speakers favored 20 years plans and visions.

Programme Planning and Management:

Whereas some speakers and participants lamented the outright lack of will or failure of implementation against layout plans others identified problems with technical implications of planning and management. They stressed the need for holistic planning. Due to the lack of proper planning several important components were omitted whereas there were some components that received more attention than others. It was realized that this anomaly should be removed. Sometimes sub-components of a single activity are not planned which poses great problems for sustainability of inputs. It was also highlighted that often peripheries of targeted areas are left attended while inputs are concentrated in known or accessible area. Besides, speakers and participants agreed that soft activities and inputs are often not visible or take long to materialize into intended outcomes. Both short term and longer term assistance programmes should be designed with

an improved system of monitoring and follow up. There was a call for an improved monitoring of Pakistan Bait Ul Mal and BISP from a former MPA (Mehr Sultana) from District Karak based on reports of benefits being secured by undeserving families. Further, beneficiary complaints and redressal systems should be put in place to improve the services.

Speakers and participants stressed the point that there was utter lack of data which compromised the quality of planning and services. This also highlighted the point that despite many years having elapsed since the last census in 1998 there has not been a new census. The result was that estimates were being used for planning and this often made the calculations wrong. Credible data should be made available to support better planning. Ideally census should be done without any further delay.

There was an agreement that there should be rigorous analysis of the stakeholders first and then their willingness to work in tandem with each other. Without all-out and synergistic efforts of the all the stakeholders it was difficult to overcome problems in this regard. Moreover, it was recommended that there should be system for coordination between the provincial and the federal government on not only routine development programs but specifically for actions for internally displaced persons and the refugee-

Some of the development professionals and practitioners pointed towards an inbuilt anomaly within programs designed by the non-profit sector, especially the emergency programs. They believed that they are promoting dependency, beggary, and corruption, infact trickling down corruption to the grassroots. It was pointed out that there was too much dependence on external and donor funds. Instead they supported inputs such as awareness and skills. They advocated a shift from need-based to right-based approach. Still others stressed the need for proper information dissemination.

On a different note, one of the participants called for the respect of local culture, indigenous institutions, *Jirga, Tiga, and* indigenous mechanisms within the context of development and for resolution of conflict and peace building.

Security, Law and Order, and Stability:

Many speakers and participants agreed that the issue of security, law and order, and general stability was posing great problem to the cause of social development. With reference to District Peshawar, Mr. Zaheer Ul Islam made the point about the complex challenge the pressure of internally displaced people (IDP), commuters, refugees, solid waste management in face of limited resources. It was shared with the participants that about fifty thousand people travelled to Peshawar every day for numerous reasons including hospitals. On the other hand about ten thousand Afghans crossed the Torkhum border each day. This placed enormous strain on the security, law and order, and general stability of the area and it often resulted in the failure of the administrators to focus on issues being discussed on the forum. With reference to this issue, led by Mian Iftikhar Hussain many speakers and participants agreed that international conspiracies were also being played on this land. Given that, it was stressed that the priority was national security rather than issues of social development. It followed that all stakeholders must assume responsibility to overcome the complex challenge posed by poor security, law and order, instability, and social underdevelopment in face of limited resources. It was found necessary to reduce dependence on donor funds and that attempts should be initiated to live within our own resources. The participants called for the respect of local culture, indigenous institutions, *Jirga, Tiga, and* indigenous mechanisms for the resolution of conflict and peace building.

Strengthening of Social Welfare Department:

There was a forceful call for the capacity enhancement and strengthening of the provincial Social Welfare Department. It was observed that too many functions were integrated into the department therefore reorganization was considered to be an imperative.

Role of Media:

Most participants continued recommending the role of media for one or the other function. These included working on changing male mentality regarding the rights of women and her place in society, mother and child health messages,

health and hygiene messages, removing negative propaganda surrounding NGOs. Infact, media cuts through every sphere of life and wields phenomenal potential to bring about change. This was evident in the very frequent call for the use of media in one thing or the other. It is therefore understood that effective use of media is an imperative for development activities.

Government Representatives:

The representatives (Mehr Taj Roghani & Prof Abbas) from the government expressed the satisfaction that the event was a good opportunity to discuss the issue of the social protection and get sound recommendation and advice from a wide array of people from within the development sector. They affirmed that they looked forward to a positive outcome of the issues discussed on the forum.

They said a donor coordination cell was established at the Chief Minister Secretariat to coordinate and synergize all the activities of development stakeholders including donors, and implementers, and beneficiaries. She lamented about duplication, rather triplication of activities within same areas however she said the cell will address this. Besides it is working on formulation of policies and removing gaps within existing policies. They said it was aimed at effective management of development activities. Additionally, a Citizen Redressal Cell was established at the CM secretariat where the citizens could lodge any complaint regarding any branch of the provincial administration. The complainant could expect a positive response from the cell within two weeks of the complaint. If there is lapse in this regard the complainant could also lodge a complaint against this cell. The government representatives also mentioned the RTI law as a major step by the government to improve governance in the province. Anybody could now seek information from any branch of the provincial administration. She said the provincial child protection unit will be able to address the issues of child protection.

They agreed with the fact that there was failure of administration in many areas. However, there was an earnest effort on the part of the government to address these issues and the steps mentioned earlier are some of the measures the government has taken to address the lapse. She highlighted the need to work for

pro poor policies and the ideals of equity and gender justice. They appreciated the idea of engaging youth in social work through stimulation by way of awareness and appropriate incentives. Their party being popular with youth they said they were in a relatively better position to stimulate the youth for social work.

Special advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare confirmed that she was working on improvement of the Social Welfare Departments. She refrained that there were a large number of NGOs in the province. She questioned such a large number of NGOs and expressed her resolve to conduct a scrutiny to remove those not on the right purpose. A committee was therefore constituted to do this. Apart from promising to look into the restructuring of the Social welfare department she also questioned the management of safe drinking water facilities by the Public Health Engineering Department instead of the Health department.

Special advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare expressed her views about mentality of the male in the area and considered this to be a challenge the stakeholders were required to confront by a variety of means including the use of consistent awareness inputs and media. Explaining the challenge she said there was fear in change and therefore it was difficult to effect this transformation soon.

She confirmed the problems identified by the administrators with regard to the administration of particularly the capital city of the province and generally the entire province due to the problem of IDP, Refugees, and patients travelling for treatment at hospitals in city centers.

She promised to look into the submissions of two participants in respect of unfamiliar situations. Earlier one of the participants from Pir Sabaq village, Azakhel, district Nowshera complained that a high school and a dispensary promised in the wake of 2010 flood was being located elsewhere. The area, he said, had 30 k population, it was flood affected and host to Afghan refugees. Dr. Anoosh had complained of the change of plans by the government to establish an Air University at the site designated for Peshawar University Botanical garden at Azakhel Nowshera.

She, along with most of the speakers, thought that programs like RAHA represents hope of the vulnerable and poor. They hoped that the recommendation will be listed for future actions.