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CONSULTANCY WITH THE PUNJAB SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

REPORT TO USAID/ISLAMABAD

PACT, Inc.

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Background

The scope of work originally provided to me by PACT indicated that the Punjab Social Services Board (PSSB) was interested in having me conduct a study to identify options/strategies for strengthening Punjab's NGOs. On arrival in Islamabad, Shaheen Attiqur Rahman requested that I meet with Samina Kamal at UNDP which I did. During our meeting it was made clear to me that the UNDP had recently funded an NGO strengthening project, known as the Bunyad[1] Project, to be implemented by the PSSB. UNDP had the impression that I would be in Pakistan for six months to help PSSB determine how this project should work, as well as to begin the actual implementation of the project, and design a series of training modules for the strengthening of the NGOs selected to act as Bunyads.

Subsequently I had discussions with Virgil Miedema and Kaneez Fatima Kassim. We determined that my role should evolve according to the needs of PSSB as articulated by Shaheen when I met her. With this as the backdrop, I left to begin working with PSSB in Lahore on 10 March.

My initial few days in Lahore were spent familiarizing myself with the PSSB, its structure, staff, services, on-going projects and its relationship to the Directorate General of Social Welfare. This was followed by discussions with Shaheen as to the nature of my assignment with the PSSB. She was under the impression that I would be assigned to PSSB for a full six months and, given that time frame, that I would design and conduct a series of training courses for a core group of master trainers. In addition, she had in mind that I would guide her, the project staff and UNDP in the implementation of the UNDP-funded Bunyad Project.

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[1]This project identifies and strengthens 16 NGOs so that they can act as resource centers to smaller NGOs. There will be 4 resource centers or Bunyads in each of the 4 selected divisions. Each of these 4 Bunyads will be sector/theme specific and will be responsible for strengthening a minimum of ten smaller or satellite NGOs

Taking into account my much shorter time frame and the fact that the start up of the Bunyad Project was delayed at the last moment by government, my role was redefined. Essentially, I was to focus on developing the Bunyad concept, defining what a Bunyad should be able to do and how it should go about doing this. In order to be able to accomplish these tasks I met with a variety of NGOs, donors and government officials (see attached list) so as to get a sense as to the strengths and limitations of the NGOs, the resources available to them, and what future directions they may take. I also had more in depth discussions with, and visited the project sites of, a few of the NGOs identified to play the role of Bunyad. This enabled me to get a sense of their capabilities and their needs.

The Bunyad Project: Possible Strategy Variations

Based on my findings, I defined what I felt would be the most appropriate role for a Bunyad to play in this project, what a Bunyad will need to know in order to fulfill its role, and the process to be employed in implementing this project. Shaheen and I spent considerable time talking about possible strategy variations and their implications. Some of these variations included:

• Strengthening one Bunyad only in the first year. This would entail developing training courses on a range of topics, then using these to train the identified Bunyad. The developed and tested courses could then be used to train the remaining 15 Bunyads in the second year. Raasta (a training consulting organization that has recently expanded its operations from Karachi to Lahore), in fact, had submitted an unsolicited proposal to Shaheen and UNDP suggesting this model and that it be the ones to provide the training to Bunyad in the first year.

• A strategy that would bring in a minimum of 4 other organizations to help strengthen the 16 Bunyads, and oversee their efforts to strengthen their 10 satellite NGOs. These 4 organizations would either be in charge of strengthening the Bunyads in one division each or in one sector each. The types of organizations that were discussed were those that had strong skill areas and/or development orientations e.g. Raasta (participatory training); Girl Guides (adult literacy, women); Save the Children Federation (income generation); World Wide Fund for Nature (environment, community

participation) and so on. In this strategy PSSB would act as coordinator, monitor and documenter.

• A range of options to limit the scope of the project, ensuring a greater chance for success, e.g. conduct this project only in 2 divisions over its 2 year life span; expand the project for a minimum of one year more; change the role that the Bunyads will play so that their focus is on acting as catalysts and facilitators rather than experts in their specific sectors

• The expansion of the micro-enterprise fund/revolving loan fund into a more generalized micro-project fund for financing small-scale project/proposals that emerge out of the Bunyad process. This would provide an easily accessible source of funds for the satellite NGOs to implement action projects resulting from their "strengthened" capacities. It would also take training beyond the realm of training for the sake of training.

The Bunyad Project: Management And Administration Needs

Further discussions with Shaheen resulted in a list of recommendations for the project and possible budget reallocations that would more closely reflect and support the process to be used in the Bunyad Project. In addition, we discussed what might be some of the management and administration needs/clarifications for smooth start up of the project. These included:

• Determining the relationships between the major players—PSSB, UNDP, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and the yet to be hired Project Manager.

• Defining the roles of the above mentioned players; defining channels of communication and decision-making.

• Clarifying the financial management of the project and clearly articulating the process of accessing funds, e.g. who will make the decisions about awarding the micro-enterprise fund/micro-project fund or about funds for training events; what are the criteria to be used for assessing requests for the micro funds; and what will be the distribution mechanism for funds both to PSSB and to the Bunyads and satellite NGOs.

• Ensuring, through a collective review, that all parties involved in the management and implementation of this project are in accordance with respect to: the goals and objectives; the methodology; the selection of the Bunyads; the specific, expected outcomes at the end of the project; the monitoring and review process. (This is a crucial step as discussions with the various parties indicated to me that there is considerable difference in the way the project is perceived programmatically and managerially.)

• Developing indicators or success criteria for the project that reflect what this project means by a "strengthened NGO".

Strengthening PSSB: Suggestions

Other activities that I undertook while in Lahore included assisting two newly emerging NGOs to think through their goals and objectives, and the programs and strategies that would help them meet their objectives. In addition, Shaheen and I explored ways in which PSSB, itself, could be strengthened. Shaheen was not too encouraging or optimistic about this prospect. In her eyes, the Bunyad Project presents a more viable alternative: placing a core group of NGOs in a position where they are able to strengthen weaker NGOs and thus eliminating NGO dependency on PSSB and other government institutions. It was only near the close of my assignment that she seemed more open to exploring the idea of strengthening PSSB. Some of the strategies discussed were:

• Developing the training capacity of PSSB. At present PSSB either borrows the trainer from the Directorate General of Social Welfare or has to seek trainers from other organizations. (The only training that it provides itself concerns helping NGOs in applying for grants-in-aid.) By building this training capacity, not only would it strengthen PSSB and the NGOs that it serves, but it could also help the wider development community by developing participatory training materials; participatory training materials appear to be extremely scarce in Pakistan. In addition, it would allow PSSB to develop and implement a training strategy that goes beyond the "one shot" training that it is familiar with and seems so prevalent in Lahore. A draft proposal was drawn up elucidating a strategy that PSSB might follow to strengthen NGOs through field-based, participatory training and small-scale learning grants, while at the same time developing its own repository of participatory training materials and approaches for wider dissemination.

• Expanding and refining PSSB's role and function. As an umbrella body and an NGO support body of sorts, PSSB could be playing a more catalytic role in the development community. Areas discussed were:

1) Information dissemination, i. e. PSSB acting as a clearinghouse for information on donors (who they are, their requirements, their areas of interest and the likes), other NGOs both local and foreign (what they are doing, what innovations or lessons they have to share and so on), training (what training courses are being offered and when), training materials (what is available, where and how to access these), development success stories and other topics of interest to the NGO community.

2) Resource matching/linking, i. e. playing an active facilitating role that encourages NGOs to link or form mutually beneficial alliances that will help improve and expand their activities. This might start with the creation of thematic learning groups that allow NGOs to share what they are already doing in that sector and identify what else they need and want to know. Based on the outputs of these discussions, PSSB would identify and facilitate the resources needed to build this knowledge and skill base, as well as bring donors into the process at appropriate times. Examples of themes could be income generation, appropriate technology, health.

3) Play a coordinating role amongst the various NGO resource bodies in Punjab so as to maximize the use of resources, technical know how and information bases.

It was felt, however, that the Bunyad Project would address many of these roles in one way or another. The project had, in fact, been designed to create NGO resource centers so that NGOs no longer had to rely on PSSB.

What resulted from these discussions was one draft proposal outlining a field-based training program for strengthening NGOs while developing PSSB's training capacity. This was submitted for consideration to the Trust for Voluntary Organizations. In addition, we discussed exploring resources that might be tapped in Islamabad. The first of these involved talking to Roshaneh Zafar at the PROWWESS unit in the World Bank to see whether she might be able to conduct a training for PSSB and 20 NGOs in Lahore on participatory approaches to development. Roshaneh agreed to do this in September at no cost on the agreement that PSSB would provide board and lodging, a training site, materials and access to 3 or 4

villages for field testing the developed materials. Shaheen indicated that she would follow up on this in the near future.

The other idea was to try and tap one of the agencies that have skilled volunteers working in Pakistan and see whether they may be able to place one or two volunteers in PSSB. This would be an attempt to temporarily overcome some of the manpower problems of PSSB--the lack of skilled, motivated staff able and willing to explore innovative ideas. Due to lack of time, I was not able to complete this investigation. Shaheen was to follow up on this with Peace Corps, UNDP's UNV Programme and Voluntary Services Overseas.

Concerns About The Bunyad Project

The Bunyad Project is extremely ambitious given its limited time frame. It aims to strengthen 160 NGOs in two years. The strategy used in this project is to enable 16 of the stronger NGOs, the Bunyads, to act as resources to these 160 smaller or nascent NGOs. There will be 4 Bunyad's per division and each of these will focus on one of 4 themes or sectors: income generation, health, education/women, community development/participation. Given the scope of this project, the limitations of the potential Bunyads, and the other commitments of PSSB (in essence just Shaheen), it seems as if it would be difficult for this project to achieve its objectives in two years.

Crucial to the design of this project is the choice of NGOs to act as Bunyads. Of the potential Bunyads that I visited, almost all were run by volunteers, people who held full time positions elsewhere. Occasionally, there were one or two paid staff at the program level. These NGOs themselves, pointed to their lack of paid, professional staff as one of their major constraints. This, then, raises the question of how these organizations, organizations that are already working to full capacity, are going to take on a new and time consuming role; and if they do take on this new function how much time will they be able to devote to implementing it? (As a corollary, too, is the question of what this additional drain on their manpower will do to their own programs?)

Moreover, when most of the potential Bunyads are themselves struggling to improve, expand, become more efficient, attract funds etc., one cannot help wonder how effectively they will be able to guide/train the nascent NGOs in these areas. Built into the original

project description is a series of training events intended to strengthen the Bunyads prior to their attempting to strengthen their satellite NGOs. It will, in my opinion, take more than a few training events on specific topics to strengthen these Bunyads. Classroom training of NGOs by itself rarely brings about the desired change in skills and attitudes. What is needed for most development-related topics is training plus hands on experiential learning followed by analysis and more training and/or more experiential learning. This is a lengthy process that cannot realistically be allowed for in the time frame of this project.

Another area of concern relates to the type of programs/activities and orientation that the Bunyads are going to promote amongst the satellite or nascent NGOs. The overwhelming majority of the NGOs that I visited and/or heard about are social welfare in orientation with some development-like activities added on (although they invariably referred to this as community development); very few had a community-based, people-centered orientation. This then means that the Bunyads will be promoting the welfare or the "mixed welfare and development" models of programs. While these, undoubtedly, have a role to play in Punjab, there is also a need to help the nascent NGOs to explore more community-based, people-centered approaches to addressing development problems. These approaches encourage community ownership of projects and have shown considerable success in other parts of Asia. Shaheen also recognizes this need. The nascent NGOs perhaps provide one of the best points at which to begin introducing new approaches, techniques, and strategies for sustainable, community development. They, however, at present seem to be perpetuating the welfare and "mixed welfare and development" programs and methodologies of the more established NGOs. This is, undoubtedly, because of lack of exposure to other approaches

Of additional concern is the selection of Bunyad by theme or sector. At the time of my consultancy the final selection of the Bunyads had not been made, but certain NGOs were identified as likely candidates. Based on the selection of potential Bunyads some concerns come to mind. For example, in intimating that a successful hospital specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis will be selected as the "Health" Bunyad, one wonders what they might have to offer nascent NGOs in terms of maternal and child health programs or community-based activities to combat malnutrition and the likes. Similarly, questions arise when one considers income generating

programs. If the "Income Generation" Bunyad considers its program with women a success because it has taught these women vocational skills, but has not looked at the income generating potential of the program, then the value of the information transmitted to nascent NGOs is questionable. Undoubtedly, the problems associated with incomplete or improper analyses of these income generating programs can be overcome by training the Bunyads (and other NGOs) in the basics of market analysis, selection of product, pricing of the product and so on. The degree of skills-upgrading needed by the Bunyads, however, to reach the point where they are proficient in these skills may require considerable training, practice and time.

Furthermore, due to pressure from the government certain divisions and their districts were identified as sites for this project. Some of these have very weak NGOs. This will present a problem in identifying NGOs to act as Bunyads in the 4 thematic areas. Logistically, too, it will be difficult to provide training to the satellite NGOs as they are far-flung.

PSSB is very fortunate to have as active and as committed a member of its staff as Shaheen. She appears to be the driving force behind PSSB's involvement in the Bunyad Project and is the only person there fully conversant with the project. Yet, like many other voluntary leaders in the NGO community, Shaheen is currently, by her own admission, over-worked and feels burnt out. There are, needless to say, obvious risks associated with placing <u>any</u> project in an organization that depends on one already over-stretched, albeit committed, individual.

AGENCIES/PEOPLE VISITED IN LAHORE AND ISLAMABAD

Mogulpura Social Society
Girl Guides
Family Welfare Cooperative Society
All Pakistan Women's Association
Raasta Development Consultants
Aurat
Insan
Youth Commission of Human Rights
Save the Children Federation
World Wide Fund for Nature
Pakistan Academy for Social Sciences
NGO Coordinating Council
Golabdevi Hospital
Women's Social Organization
AGHS Legal Aid Cell
3 rural NGOs (all seeking assistance from PSSB)
First Women's Banking
Small Projects Office
Government Training Institute
Department of Sociology at the university
Pakistan Institute of Management
Social Research Consultants and Associates
Seer (Pvt.) Ltd., Consultants in Development Management
Women's Development and Welfare Centre
Directorate General of Social Welfare, Punjab
World Bank; PROWWESS Unit
UNICEF
UNDP
Trust for Voluntary Organizations