



**WORKING WITH UNCERTAINTY AND COMPLEXITY**  
The RSP Experience in FATA

## **Acknowledgements**

Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) is grateful to all the partners and stakeholders for their continued support and generous contribution towards making a difference in the lives of marginalised and vulnerable communities in FATA.

## **Cover photograph**

Manager Conference in Upper Kurram  
(Dec 24, 2011)

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UNCERTAINTY AND COMPLEXITY**  
The RSP Experience in FATA

By Masood-ul-Mulk

**FATA UNIT**  
SARHAD RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN

## **ACRONYMS**

<b>CIDA</b>	Canadian International Development Agency
<b>CO</b>	Community Organisation
<b>FATA</b>	Federal Administered Tribal Area
<b>FLADP</b>	FATA Local Area Development Programme
<b>FR</b>	Frontier Regions
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agriculture Development
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>MCOs</b>	Men Community Organisations
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>SRSP</b>	Sarhad Rural Support Programme
<b>RSPN</b>	Rural Support Programmes Network
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>WCIG</b>	Women Common Interest Group
<b>WCO</b>	Women Community Organisations

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# ABSTRACT

This paper captures the experiences of Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) in implementing a community-driven approach between 2006 and 2013 in Pakistan's turbulent borderland, officially known as Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

**H**ow do development practitioners work and at the same time deliver results in environments that are uncertain, fragile, chaotic and complex. Despite many past negative experiences by a number of implementing agencies, it can in fact be done. This paper shows how, by capturing the experiences of Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) in implementing a community driven approach between 2006 and 2013 in Pakistan's turbulent borderland, officially known as Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

SRSP is a leading non-government organisation, with over two decades of experience of working in grass root development and community empowerment, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region that borders FATA, and shares many cultural and social similarities with it. The Tribal Areas have many unique and highly volatile social facets. They were initially created as a special zone by the British Raj in part to serve as a buffer between unruly Afghanistan and British India and in part because they were so difficult to administer. The administrative system in the region has been a mixture of tribal practice and customs supervised by political administration appointed by the government. The tribal inhabitants of the area have been allowed to pursue a largely tribal lifestyle unfettered by the laws of British India or its successor state, Pakistan. The war against the Soviet Union in the 80s and the events after 9/11 have made FATA even more dangerous, volatile and unpredictable as it has become the center of the war in the region.

In 2006, the government decided to launch a development strategy called the FATA Sustainable Plan for the area. One important arm of the strategy was to encourage civil society organisations to play a prominent role in promoting development and bringing about social transformation in the region. SRSP was



Winters in  
Upper Kurram

given the task of leading this process. The government wanted SRSP to start implementing a project with definite time lines, clear inputs, outputs and outcomes and a monitoring system to link the outcome with the project activities. SRSP was adamant that in an uncertain environment, only a 'process approach' where both the organisation and its programme grew from learning-from-the-field would be workable. The government accepted this approach and gave SRSP an endowment of Rs 200 million to set up FATA Unit within the organisation. This organisation was given the task of learning from the field and developing a programme from it. It was also given the task of leveraging additional resources to scale up the programme. In 2008 CIDA agreed to fund a CAD\$ 3 million programme to be implemented in Kurram and FR Regions of Peshawar.

As soon as the programme started, the project areas were hit by war, sectarian and communal tensions, breaking down of communication, rapidly changing government policies. The project area that had been identified as a 'soft' area, suddenly became a 'hard area.' Despite the complexities in which the project found itself it was able to deliver and attain the goals and objectives set out in the CIDA funded project. This was largely possible because the endowment and process approach has enabled SRSP to implement the project incrementally, using social learning, adaptation, iteration and emergence for strategy making. CIDA provided support for this by promoting a culture of rapid learning and adaptation through its teams based in Islamabad. This ability of SRSP and the project to rapidly adapt to a changing environment enabled the project to successfully deliver on the ground. This paper captures the challenges that came up in the project and how SRSP successfully handled them. ■



Despite the complexities in which the project found itself it was able to deliver and attain the goals and objectives...

# The 'Insoluble Problem'

FATA has thus always been an area of contradictions, where vengeance killings and vendettas were everyday affairs, banditry and kidnappings common, raiding a way of life, [...] and where minority groups could live in relative safety.

In his book, 'Viceroy's Agent', Charles Chenevix Trench describes the North West Frontier of what was then India, as containing the Indian Governments most insoluble problem. (Chenevix 1987) Known today as the Federally Administered Tribal Area or FATA, the insoluble problem stretches from Upper Dir District in the north to the border of Baluchistan province in the south and contains a mainly Pushtun population whose tribes have been allowed to pursue a traditional lifestyle unfettered by most of the laws that apply elsewhere in Pakistan. As Trench writes, "by inclination and tradition, and in some cases economic necessity, they were traders and raiders rather than farmers or pastoralists, men who were usually armed to the teeth and who knew no masters, least of all the tribal headmen or Malik's with whom the Government must perforce negotiate. Authority resided, if anywhere, in the Jirga, the tribal assembly, in which every man was, in theory, equal; a Malik's power depended on his personality, his wealth, and the number of his adherents.

That the tribes did not live in perpetual anarchy was due to their observance (strict in some tribes, less so in others) of the

traditional code of Pukhtunwali. Under this code a man's first duty was to take vengeance at all hazards but in no hurry for any injury or insult to oneself, one's family, clan or tribe. The second inviolable duty was to give unstinted hospitality to a guest, be he Moslem, Christian or unbeliever, and to guard his life even at the cost of one's own, and to give protection and asylum to any who sought it. As a result, fugitives from government justice or from another tribe, Hindu merchants, Sikh mechanics, Punjabi artisans, Christian minorities or professional entertainers could all live and carry on their business with a fair degree of safety". FATA has thus always been an area of contradictions, where vengeance killings and vendettas were everyday affairs, banditry and kidnappings common, raiding a way of life, but also where fugitives could hope for refuge and where minority groups could live in relative safety.

Life settled a bit in FATA after the creation of the state of Pakistan that is until war began in Afghanistan in the late 1970's. This meant a radical change for the frontier districts who acted as the conduit for the mujahideen fighters, their munitions and immense amounts of money in

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..in the Jirga, the tribal assembly, [...] every man was, in theory, equal...

the 1980's and 90's, as well as providing a home for hundreds of thousands of refugees. Later the FATA areas became a refuge for radical Taliban elements fleeing the American-led offensive following the events of 9/11. From bad to worse, FATA is now known as Pakistan's Bad Lands and has in recent years gained notoriety for the lawlessness, conflict and terrorism which has its roots in the area. ■



Orientation for Village Reconstruction Committee on Shelter Designs (South Waziristan Agency, October 2012)



# How the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are Administered



Internally Displaced Persons from South Waziristan at Registration Point in Ratta Kolachi Stadium (DIK, March 2013)



Initially created as a special zone by the British Raj to serve as a buffer between Afghanistan and British India, each specific tribal area was administered by a Political Agent. As an adjunct to the 'politicals', various British Indian army detachments were stationed at strategically located forts as were 'scout groups', whose members were drawn from the tribal areas. Most accounts speak of an ongoing difference of opinion between the 'politicals' who tended to see things from the viewpoint of the local inhabitants, and the military who did not and who variously practiced a punitive policy termed 'butcher, burn and bolt' rather than negotiated settlements preferred by the 'politicals'.

Following the creation of Pakistan, FATA continued to be governed by special laws. The area retained its tribal characteristics and the laws and governance systems have been kept as such to preserve those characteristics. A mixture of tribal practices and customs supervised by a political administration appointed by the Federal Government of Pakistan, the administrative, governance and judicial systems are all very different to those applied elsewhere in the country.

In recent years, the spillover of the war in Afghanistan into the region and the radicalisation of certain elements have led to the killing of many of the traditional tribal leaders. The absence of recognised leaders poses an increasingly serious challenge to the political and administrative system. In addition, the trend towards religious factionalism instigated in part by Wahabi-Sunni Taliban infiltrators has led to sectarian violence of a previously unknown scale. In addition, military actions by the Pakistan military, plus American-instigated predator drone strikes against suspected terrorist enclaves and the uncertainties of various political affiliations and secret service activities, have all contributed to an increasingly dangerous, unpredictable and highly volatile situation, all of which is hardly an ideal environment to initiate development. ■



...all contributed to an increasingly dangerous, unpredictable and highly volatile situation...

# Geography and the People of FATA

FATA is the north western tribal region of Pakistan, comprises seven tribal agencies and six frontier regions and it's population is around 3.2 million.



View of Chakmalai, Tehsil Sarwakai (South Waziristan, May 2011)



The situation has become more complex because of the presence of security forces [...]in the region.

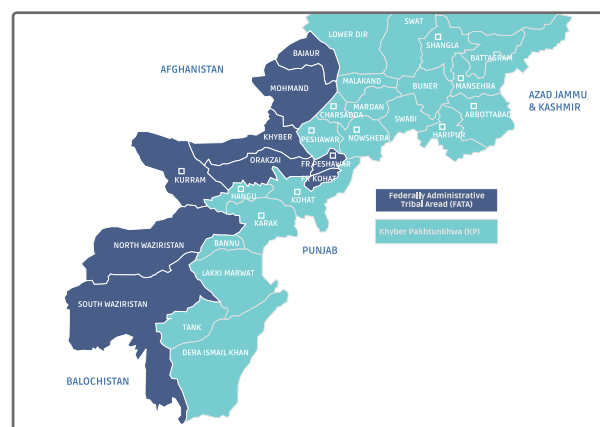
**F**ATA is spread over an area of 27,200sq km and is administratively divided into seven Agencies, each one managed by a Political Agent. There are also seven other tribal regions called Frontier Regions, which are not geographically smaller but also support a smaller population and are more marginalised in terms of decision making and role in FATA. The last census estimated the population to be around 3.2 million. The population is made up of tribes and clans and system of collective and territorial responsibility is applied under the Frontier Crimes Regulation to run the area by the

Administration. The situation has become more complex because of the presence of security forces in the area who are now involved in many of the administrative decisions to manage the war in the region.

Separate from the Tribal Agencies, the Frontier Regions (FRs) are to an extent an anomaly because they are a hybrid between the provincial set up and the Tribal Agencies. Lacking a specifically dedicated political agent, FRs are run by the District Heads of neighboring settled districts who, at arms length, apply tribal laws and systems. Poor cousins of the other Tribal Agencies, FRs are separate



Map of FATA





enclaves spread across the region but who do not have their own independent administrative officers and who, unlike the Tribal Agencies are poorly represented in the National Assembly.

The region has appallingly low literacy rates and is poorly served by medical facilities. Overall literacy rates are 17% compared with national levels of 45%, and even worse literacy rates of women are less than 3% compared to the 32% at national level. Less than 40% of the population of children is enrolled in primary and higher secondary education compared to the national averages of 86%, drop-out rates are high with half the children in primary school leaving school before they reach class five. Health services are even more dismal. There is just one doctor per 7,600 people which is one fifth the national average. Against this, is an ever increasing pressure on health facilities because of porous

borders and people coming in from Afghanistan. Infant mortality rates of nearly 9% and maternal mortality rates of 1% are also unacceptably high. Family life is hard with only 56% of the population having direct access to drinking water while piped water at household level is available to only 3% of the population. Many women have to travel long distance to fetch water. One bright spot is electricity supply which is available to 62% of the population but only 2% have access to natural gas for cooking and heating.

The population is almost entirely rural, living in generally fortified villages and hamlets. Most houses (60%) are built from unbaked bricks and only 36% are constructed using cement and concrete. Few houses are roofed with corrugated iron and most use traditional materials. Only 10% of the population has access to



**Voluntary  
Repatriation  
Facilitation Center  
for South Waziristan  
IDP at Kaur Fort, Tank  
(April 2012)**



**The region has appallingly low literacy rates and is poorly served by medical facilities.**

properly constructed sanitary facilities. Poverty is wide spread in the area with the population relying on animal flocks and rain-fed subsistence agriculture. Alternative sources of income are essential for survival. In the past this included levies on passing caravans plus raiding, banditry and kidnapping for ransom, a practice that has increased in recent years. Some men find employment in cities and towns. Women are mainly bound to the confines of the house or nearby agricultural land.

Agriculture is subsistence. Only 7% of the area is suitable for cropping of any sort and of this, nearly half is entirely dependent on a very uncertain rainfall. Most of the area is single cropped and productivity is low. Livestock, including household poultry, are an important subsistence adjunct. Large numbers of the young men seek alternative employment in cities such as Karachi or travel to the Middle East. Transit trade is an important source of livelihood but road density is very low compared to national averages. Most of the economy is informal.

The overall picture is one of a heavily armed fiercely independent, male dominated warrior people trapped in the past, where women occupy a subservient and largely housebound role, and where the overall situation is one of increasing uncertainty and violence. Indicative of the situation is a stated preference for strikes by predator drones rather than military campaigns because casualties are far less.

What a choice to have to make. ■

# The Development Conundrum

**G**iven the above, and what has been described is but a thin slice of the real situation, the question is this – how do you initiate development projects in an area which still exists in the tribal past, where there is banditry, lethal vendettas and a tribal law that permits measured violence, and which is now increasingly complicated by the influence of various terrorist groups, by the probable talibanisation of many of the disaffected young, by sectarian clashes, and by sometimes heavy-handed military actions, and the uncertain fear of strikes by unseen predator drones. ■

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Underlying our society are vast social networks and strong ties of reciprocity.



First Contact with community in Village Charmang, Tehsil Nawagey (Bajaur Agency, June 2013)



# The RSP's Approach to Development and Complexity

Over the last three decades 'Rural Support Programmes' (RSPs) have emerged as the largest players in grass root development and humanitarian work among civil society organisations in Pakistan. The RSP movement in Pakistan consists of an aggregate of eleven civil society institutions each of which shares a common approach to working with communities, to development and change, and scale of operations. RSP's are loosely bound together as a network by a coordinating body called Rural Support Programmes Network. Data from 2013 show RSPs as working in 112 districts of Pakistan with 5.3 million community members and a total of 313,144 community organisations.

The RSP approach has at its heart the belief that marginalised communities have within them the capacity for self help. Underlying our society are vast social networks and strong ties of reciprocity. This social capital is what communities turn towards in times of difficulties and distress. One of the most striking examples of the role these social networks can play was demonstrated when more than 3 million internally displaced persons flooded into the plains of Mardan and Swabi in May 2010. Amazingly, this enormous influx was fed, housed and otherwise cared for a fortnight by resident communities, before any help from national and international organisations could be organised. Even during normal times many examples can be cited of the ability of communities to organise and mobilise collective action to address common problems.

The challenge for any development practitioner has always been this: can the inherent capacity for self help that exists within almost every community in this region be mobilised for development? Experience has shown that this is possible if the organisation working with the communities is flexible, responsive, adaptive, people-centered and accountable. Such an organisation (and the RSPs exhibit all of these criteria) can generate trust and is able to catalyse collective action in these communities in a way that no other organisation has been able to manage. RSPs do this by focusing on three major actions:

- » organise communities into groups to build their capacity to plan; to manage resources; resolve conflict and develop linkages with essential service providers. Village or community organisations are built in the democratic spirit with leadership that is accountable to the base membership. At higher level these organisations form networks and local support organisations which can undertake advocacy and benefit from economies of scale for the communities.
- » the second role of the RSPs is to identify champions or social activists within the communities who can take leadership role within their communities. These are volunteers who will play a prominent and vital role in taking the process forward.
- » the third role of the RSPs is to provide technical and economic packages to the communities for their economic development. This portfolio of what the RSPs do is very wide and includes social mobilisation, community infrastructure development, micro finance and micro investment funds, human resource development, gender and development and humanitarian work. ■

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Marginalised communities have within them the capacity for self help.

# The Sarhad Rural Support Programme and FATA



SRSP was established in 1989 and works with over 22,000 community organisations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA

**T**he Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) was established in 1989 and works with over 22,000 community organisations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The province does not only share boundaries with FATA but also shares cultural and linguistic characteristics. Areas such as Kohistan in Hazara, Arandu in Chitral, Tor Ghar and parts of Dir are where SRSP has considerable experience and share many similar characteristics with FATA in terms of culture and attitude to development. SRSP also has a wide set of competencies in fields like institution building, community built infrastructure, human resource development,

micro finance, education, gender and development and humanitarian work. SRSP has received funding from over 30 international donors both bilateral and international NGOs.

In 2006, in keeping with its commitment to the FATA Sustainable Development Plan government decided to support the concept of rural support programmes as a means of delivering development through civil society. Following extensive discussions with the Chairman of the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and SRSP the government accepted the organisational approach, advocated by SRSP in contrast to the project approach as the



**Community dialogue in Village Kotkai, Tehsil Sara Rogha (South Waziristan Agency, Sep 2012)**



**Water Supply Tubewell and Overhead Tank established in Upper Kurram (Kurram Agency, Nov 2010)**



primary strategy through which it would pursue development in the region. The project approach had been strongly advocated by government's own planners and had been the previously accepted norm. The problem with this approach was that although the plans looked good, operating on the ground was a different story. In order to pursue the organisational approach, government granted SRSP an endowment of Rs 200 million to specifically support a FATA Unit to be located within SRSP. A programme support unit for FATA was established within SRSP to facilitate this process.

It was envisaged that in time, the FATA Unit within SRSP would transition to become a separate and independent FATA RSP over a period of time. The next step was to select two areas in which to trial the RSP concept as a means of delivering development. For this purpose the Agency of Kurrum and the Frontier region of Peshawar were selected by the government, both being regarded at the time as soft areas compared with the traditionally harder areas such as north and south Waziristan. However, nothing is ever as it first seems and in very short order, both areas moved into the hard category. This made life rather interesting for SRSP.

**Kurrum Agency** is spread over 3,380 sq km with a population in the last census of 450,000. Kurrum is divided into Upper, Middle and Lower Kurrum. The Upper area is comparatively more developed being closer to the urban center of Parachinar, while Middle and Lower



**Dairy Farming Training for Women from WCO Basoo (Kurram Agency, July 2011)**



The RSP approach has at its heart the belief that marginalised communities have within them the capacity for self help.

Kurrum have lower literacy rates and lower level of social indicators. In Upper Kurrum 80% of the population is Shia while in Central Kurrum 95% is Sunni and in Lower Kurrum 80% is Sunni. The economy is predominantly agricultural and pastoral with seasonal migration for off farming income being important part of livelihood strategies. During the British Raj, Kurrum was regarded as a model agency with good roads, few law and order problems, and with the introduction of kareze water systems (underground aqueducts), improved crop, vegetable and fruit varieties, and such income earning activities and the export of an extract from

” although the plans looked good, operating on the ground was a different story

a local shrub (artemesia sp.) for the control of roundworm, the Turi tribesmen of upper Kurrum were the most prosperous and reliable on the Frontier (Chenevix Trench). However life changes, and during the Mujahideen war in Afghanistan, in part because the agency projects into Afghanistan, Kurrum was a major access route for fighters and supplies. In the early 1990's, it was possible to sit out on clear evenings on the verandah of the elegant government rest house in Parachinar and track the scud missiles as they passed overhead.

As SRSP found, the legacy of this period is evident today. No longer is Kurrum as reliable as it once was.

## The Frontier Region of Peshawar

is much smaller than Kurrum and has an area of 261 sq km. Its 39 villages have a combined population of 53,841. The Region is bordered by Kohat, Nowshera and Dara Adam Khel as well as the city of Peshawar. There are four resident tribes - the Gina Kur, Hassan Khel, Zuaki, Ashokhel. The area is mainly hilly with about 4,953 acres of cultivable land. The proximity of Peshawar provides many job opportunities to supplement an otherwise meager living to be obtained from agriculture and livestock. Part of the region can be regarded as peri-urban and is integrated with the larger economy of Peshawar. It was not anticipated that this region would also change from a *soft* to a relatively *hard* area.

One of SRSP's first tasks was to establish organisations in Kurrum Agency and FR Peshawar through whom community development work would be initiated. The Programme Support Unit based in Peshawar was to lead this process. Two field units were also established, one each in Kurrum and Peshawar and were manned by staff with previous experience in social mobilisation, engineering and human resource development. The head office of SRSP was responsible for providing leadership, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, finance and audit functions and resource mobilisation.

The broad strategy of the programme was to establish viable community institutions and then work through these to enact development in the region. The field units were to

learn from the field through formal and informal interactions with the communities, develop a knowledge base about the region, and were to position themselves to be prepared to rapidly respond to the needs of the communities. Field units were given a high degree of independence and SRSP's staff who lived and operated in the field were allowed to make decisions according to the local context. This included assisting decision about where to work, provide assistance in engineering aspects of specific projects selected by communities, as well as providing training for community leadership and group management.

The existence of the endowment was crucial – before any other donor entered the field, income derived from the endowment was used to support the PSU and the field units, with any residual being used to train community activist or respond to immediate infrastructure needs.

The Memorandum of Agreement between the FATA Secretariat and SRSP, also called for SRSP to use the existence of government support to leverage additional resources from international and national sources to expand the programme. SRSP approached a number of donors among which the first to respond was CIDA. A project was designed and funding became available from CIDA in 2008. The stated goal of this project was to alleviate poverty in select communities through improved livelihoods, basic development services, and income generating opportunities and improved local governance



The broad strategy of the programme was to establish viable community institutions and then work through these to enact development in the region.

and to contribute to Canada's whole of government approach to border security and stability. This goal was to be achieved via three project objectives:

- » empower targeted communities through collective action to take ownership of their socio economic development and better manage conflict in the community;
- » improve household livelihood and income in the project area;
- » and increase coordination between government and community institutions as a means of better utilising resources and to maximise benefits for the poor and vulnerable.

The CIDA funded programme remained the main programme of SRSP in FATA over the next four years. However on demand from the government, SRSP leveraged additional funds and expanded its development and humanitarian programmes to South Waziristan, Mohmand, Bajaur over the next few years. These funds came from UNHCR, GIZ-funded RAHA projects and UNICEF.

The overall CIDA project has operated with a fair deal of success and has involved communities in the development process at the grass root level as well as developing a rich body of knowledge about how project interventions can best be made in FATA. A one year no cost extension was given to the project in 2012. ■

# Specific Achievements

Starting from 2006, SRSP has helped set up 232 male community organisations and 10 women organisations in Kurrum and FR regions while 108 women's interest groups have been formed in Kurrum. These organisations have formed nine higher level networks who are better positioned to act as advocates. The networks also promote information sharing and enable benefits to accrue from economies of scale. More than 14,000 beneficiaries benefitted and participated in the social mobilisation process in this project

Overall, the combined communities have completed 157 infrastructure projects. These include the provision of clean drinking water, irrigation schemes, roads and micro hydro units. Benefits have accrued to over 41,312 people. Further interventions include :

- » over 10,912 people in the livelihood sectors of agriculture, livestock production and small scale enterprises have directly benefitted and 250 demonstration plots have been established;
- » some 325 men and women have been trained as agriculture and livestock specialists
- » 1732 men and women have been involved in enterprise development with specific training provided to 423 entrepreneurs and 177 enterprises established through start-up grants.
- » 18 community schools have also been established in the more remote regions and 2,100 hundred children, most of whom are girls are now receiving a basic education. Some 36 teachers have also received training. Over 34,000 households benefitted from these programmes
- » In addition, some 134 community organisations have benefitted from health and education activities.
- » Special Access to Social Services programmes have also provided good opportunities for government and communities to come together to improve the quality of service delivery. More than 13,000 villagers and community members have taken part of this process.
- » and perhaps most importantly, the programme in the region has successfully dealt with conflict and complexities at social, institutional and policy levels.
- » Impact studies and Most Significant Change Studies carried out by SRSP show a good impact on the communities. (These impact studies have also been published).

SRSP ran a lean organisational structure for FATA comprising of local staff backed by strong support at its Head Office, thus minimising costs. There were no external consultants adding up the costs. In this sense, what it attained was also very economical.

Details of all SRSP Programmes (both CIDA-funded, Endowment-funded and in Kurrum, FR Peshawar, South Waziristan, Mohmand, Bajaur and Orakzai in both development and humanitarian sectors are given in the Annexure (Programme Summary Sheet). ■

# Complexity in Project Implementation

## Just how hard has the FATA programme been?

The above statistics provide a rather glib view of the apparent success of the programme. Underneath it all however, has been a situation fraught with uncertainty and danger. The programme achievements speak highly of the effectiveness of the organisational approach under conditions of extreme adversity. The statistics show none of the uncertainty and complexity the project faced or how it was able to cope with these and go on to deliver a successful programme.

As we already know, FATA presents a unique set of challenges for development practitioners. The typical linear and causal model of development with a clear set of activities, outputs and outcomes and a monitoring and evaluation system that can attribute any change to the project activities does not easily apply to the region's highly uncertain and complex environment.

The war in post-9/11 Afghanistan, and the spill-over of activities by various extremist groups that eventually spread to the region and which at various times engulfed both Kurram and FATA Peshawar was one of those worst case scenarios that most planners prefer to ignore or pretend will not happen. One result was the onset of an unprecedented level of sectarian strife which pitted Shia villagers against Sunni neighbors in Kurram (in part due to the growing influence of radical Sunni elements infiltrating from Afghanistan), and which led to the closure of all road access between Peshawar and Kurram for almost two years. How, you might ask, can a project proceed when access is denied?

What about cost escalations, personnel issues and management? Add to this, the increasing uncertainty regarding government policies to find answers to the escalating insecurity and a highly conservative environment. Further, the breakdown in communication between the two main Sunni and Shia communities of Kurram added an unforeseen complication to local staff selection and placement. All this required sensitivity and the need to respond to fast-changing security issues that affected staff movements, project plans and resource allocation. Throw into this the baggage of previous, very unpopular projects, one of whose offices had actually been burnt down by enraged

or disaffected villagers and we have a situation that can only be tackled through adaptive and emergent planning, fast footwork, and a full understanding of the underlying context of what was actually going on.

There is no question at all that the complex factors summarised above posed challenges for the project. The situation demanded an ability to learn, adapt and respond with rapidity. The traditional approach of following a pre-determined blueprint would simply not work – it is probably an understatement to say that the traditional tools of planning and project execution, monitoring and accountability would be severely challenged in such an environment – the challenge is in fact terminal. Instead, a system based on learning and an ability to quickly adapt and change needs to be put in place.

What then can we conclude? Well, as the areas known as FATA, for a variety of variously serious socio-political reasons, are likely to be the focus of attention of the international community for years to come. It is important that the lessons learnt from this process are clearly stated. The next step in this paper is thus to attempt to provide an understanding of the various complexities that the project faced and how the concomitant issues were addressed. ■



↑ Voluntary Return Transport Facility provided to IDPs returning from new Durrani Camp (Kurram Agency, March 2012)

# Understanding COMPLEXITY

The framework assists us to understand the complexity of the situation faced by SRSP, and the decisions taken in an attempt to deal with it.

In the early 1990's various thinkers and academics began to explore, understand and explain how complexity affected the management or development of various systems. This work is described in various papers and on a number of websites with perhaps the most significant and well-recognised explanation being the Cynefin (ku-nev-in) Framework (Snowden & Kurtz ref.)<sup>1</sup>

A detailed explanation of the framework is beyond the bounds of this paper. Suffice it to say

1. Cynefin (ku-nev-in) is a Welsh word one of whose meanings is to call upon our understanding of complex, adaptive system popularised by D. Snowden. The framework can be used to help understand complex problems and help managers take decision in addressing those problems. Further information is readily available on the web and in a number of publications.

that the framework assists us to understand the complexity of the situation faced by SRSP, and the decisions taken in an attempt to deal with these. In sum, the Cynefin framework divides the issues facing projects and leaders into five categories, each of which can be defined by the relationship between cause and effect.

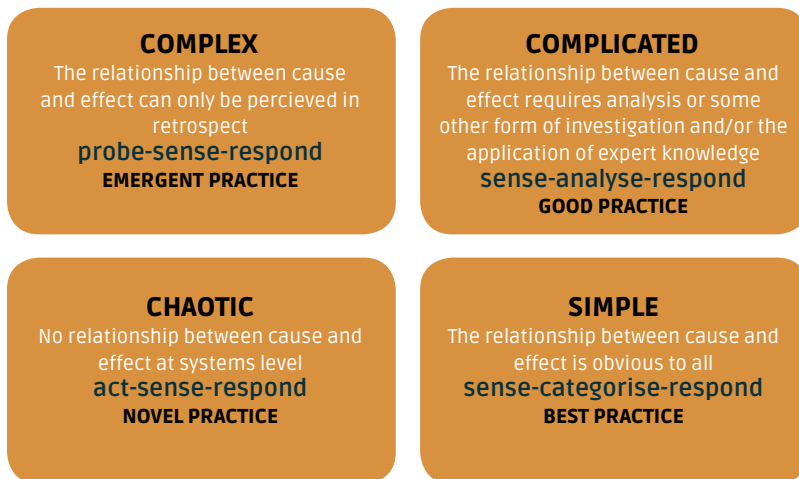
Four of these categories -simple, complicated, complex and chaotic- require leaders to diagnose situations and respond in contextually appropriate ways. The fifth category is a sort of contextual pressure valve, and applies when it is not clear which of the first four categories applies to a given situation. These five categories can be further explained as follows:

So now to FATA - in dealing with complex environments, the standard assumptions of organisational theory that there is a given and predictable level of order, an idea grounded in Newtonian Science, has to be



**Third Dialogue for Drinking Water Supply Schemes (Hand Pumps) with MCO Islahi Committee Azad Khel, Jana Kor (FR Peshawar, Feb 2009)**





 Cynefin Framework



Great flexibility and a willingness to abandon the standard blue, print approach to development is required if any project is to have a chance of success.

abandoned. The assumption underlies scientific management and encourages simplifications that are useful in ordered circumstances. In FATA, the context changes rapidly and becomes complex – without beating around the bush it can be said that simplification fails. In such circumstances good leadership demands an ability to make rapid and sometimes quite dramatic adaptations of any pre-conceived plan<sup>2</sup>.

- » the simple context is characterised by stability and clear cause and effect relationships that are easily understood by everyone. The right answer is often undisputed and obvious to all. Aspects that are little subject to change such as credit disbursement and recovery belong here and require straight forward management and monitoring. It is the task of project leadership to sense, categorise and respond, or, in other words to assess and then categorise a given situation and then base a response on established practice, adhering all the while to what is known as best practice.
- » the complicated context on the other hand, may have a multiplicity of correct options and though there is a clear relationship between cause and effect this may not be clear to everyone. In the simplest context, leaders must sense, categorise and respond to a situation. In contrast to a simple context, a leader replaces the need to categorise a situation with the requirement to instead analyse the situation. Because of the need to analyse, expertise is generally required. For example, a person dealing with a poor reception by a television may guess

some of the causative reasons, but has to take the set to a technician to resolve the problem. The technician does this by applying a technically complicated investigative and problem-solving process. There is only one right answer and this can be discovered using the correct investigative processes.

- » the third category is a complex context where right answers cannot be easily ferreted out. An example here is the difference between a car and a rain forest. In the former the car is a complicated machine, but an expert mechanic can take one apart and reassemble it without changing a thing. The car is static and the whole is the sum of its parts. The rain forest on the other hand, is in constant flux - species become extinct, weather patterns change and the whole is far more than the sum of the parts. A change in the water source may have an impact which cannot be foreseen. This is the realm that has been rather quixotically termed the unknown-unknowns.
- » the fourth category or domain is where chaos reigns. In this context searching for the right answer will be pointless. The relationship between cause and effect are impossible to determine because they shift constantly - no manageable pattern exists and anyone seeking one finds only turbulence. Examples of this are sudden catastrophic events such as an earthquake. Initially chaos reigns, and then complexity, but slowly order and stability are brought to bear. However, in almost every case, the order, style and type of response will be different - be sudden events like an earthquake which hits act to establish. The order, then sense where

<sup>2</sup> Please also refer to David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone in "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making" dated November 2007 in Harvard Business Review from which we borrow to explain the ideas of Cynefin Framework.

stability is present and from where it is absent, and then respond by working to transform the situation from chaos to complexity, where the identification of emerging patterns can both help mitigate future crises and discern new opportunities. However, no one situation will be the same, and new approaches must be constantly determined.

It can be posed that in FATA, in most instances projects will be operating in the complex zone or domain. There will be right answers over here. They will have to be found using iteration, adaptation and emergence. This is a difficult but not impossible domain in which to carry out development activities. Great flexibility and a willingness to abandon the standard blueprint approach to development is required if any project is to have a chance of success.

In the case of this project the complexities included:

- » the long delay in getting funds to scale up the project;
- » the absence of good information about the project area;
- » the expansion of conflict in Afghanistan and other tribal areas to the project area;
- » the breakdown of road access to Kurrum from Peshawar for almost two years and the continuous breakdown over the other years of the project
- » the requirement to develop innovative alternatives;
- » other security issues which led to different programme areas quickly changing from 'soft' to 'hard' in an unpredictable way;
- » the resultant need to change resource allocations at different time in the life of the project;
- » the baggage of old community-driven projects and negative NGO narratives in the project area which had to be addressed to redevelop a relationship of trust with the communities;
- » the sectarian violence in Kurrum and its impact for project interventions, geographical outreach and staff selection and placement;
- » a similar outbreak of conflict in the FR Peshawar area which required swift adaptive changes;
- » a varying degree of uncertainty in government policies and the need to find space for civil society to operate because of government's changing official attitude and security policies;
- » the puzzle of how to best use opportunities in the humanitarian crisis for civil society in the area.

All these were important issues which had deep impact on the project. Even using the best predictive models available, little of the above could have been foreseen at the time the project was initially conceived. Once work began in the

communities, the situation in specific areas could, and did, change from one domain to another (complicated to complex) in very short order. This could have brought activities such as infrastructure projects of the establishment of schools to an abrupt halt. That it did not was due to the very flexible and highly adaptive approach adopted by project management and the close involvement of the communities. The situation on the ground remained difficult but there was a system for implementing the projects which brought some kind of order to the entire process.

SRSP was able to deal with the complexity of the situation because its organisational approach gave the programme long term stability. It also enabled to cope with many of these uncertain events. The CIDA funded project had clear outcomes, but in terms of activities and outputs there was considerable scope for learning, adaption and flexibility to give the staff enough space to cope with the situation and maneuver around it. Feedback from the field and the emphatic and positive attitude of CIDA officials were highly instrumental in helping the project to adapt to difficult, and sometimes dangerously complex situations. ■



**Women IDP from South Waziristan entering Registration Point in Ratta Kolachi Stadium (DIK, March 2013)**



# Complexities

## Blueprint vs. Process Approach<sup>3</sup>



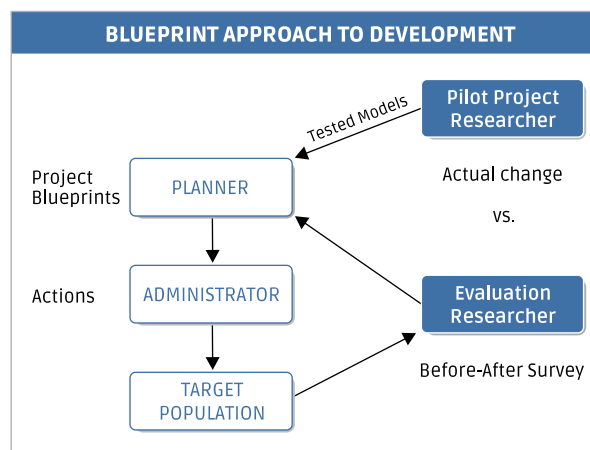
Health Awareness Raising Session organised for students of Government Girls degree College, Parachinar in collaboration with the Agency Health Department (Kurram Agency, Sep 2011)

It is one thing to be asked by government, as SRSP was in 2006, to extend the rural support programme concept into FATA, and quite another to 'educate' the government as to what this really means and to then get them on-side and fully supportive.

Following a series of presentations at Governors House, Peshawar, the first suggestion by government was for SRSP to submit a proposal for a specific, time-limited project to be implemented in selected FATA areas. This proposal presented an immediate problem.

For a start, the Blueprint Approach is based on the assumption that the problem which the project aims to address and the solution to the problem are well-understood. Given this, the project addresses the problem through the provision of resources and inputs leading to well-defined outputs and outcomes - provided a series of assumptions underlying this relationship are fulfilled. The Monitoring System of the project can be easily established by systems which aim to link changes in outcome to the activities and output of the project.

In the Blueprint Approach pilot projects are used to test ideas. Researchers provide data



from the pilot project (and other studies) which enable planners to choose the most cost effective project design to achieve the desired outcome. This 'design' then becomes a blueprint for implementation. Administrators

of the implementing organisation are supposed to execute the plans according to a fairly rigid and inflexible set of specifications and schedules. At the end of the project cycle an evaluation researcher is tasked to measure actual versus planned outcomes so that the blueprint can be revised for large scale implementation. Once in train, the whole schema is relatively inflexible (ref. diagram below). (Korten, 1980)

There are many reasons why the Blueprint Approach is poorly suited to an area like FATA. For a start, objectives are likely to be multiple and ill-defined and subject to negotiated change. The tasks specified by the project are not clear and the outcomes are not explicitly defined. The environment is unpredictable, uncertain and chaotic.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the ideas and diagrams used in this section to explain the process approach are borrowed from D. Korten's Community Organisation and Rural Development: *A Learning Process Approach* (1980)

## The Concept of 'fit'

The failure of projects in fragile environments has increasingly drawn attention to the fact that iteration, learning, adaption have to be an integral part of the project design and implementation. It is for this reason that in development literature you find increasing stress on finding the best 'fit' rather than trying to use best practices from one context to another to deal with such complexities. In such situations the most successful programmes are unlikely to be designed at the desk of the planners but emerge from actual learning experience in the field through a learning process.

Where this has happened, villagers (or a target population) and programme staff jointly shared resources and learning to develop a programme that were the best fit under the prevailing circumstances. Leadership and team work played a crucial role in developing the programmes and the notion of pre-planned blueprints was redundant. A flexible programme approach required three virtually simultaneous activities where various aspects had to be tailored or 'fitted' to each other:

- » a fit had to be developed between the needs of the communities and the programme outputs. Questions to be answered include determining the needs of the communities and whether programmes can be developed to address these needs; Communities may want drinking water while programmes are designed to deliver financial

services. How can this be overcome? Should the most sophisticated machinery be used for setting up micro hydro units in environments where it's impossible to find a good electronic engineer or establish systems which may not be most efficient but are easy to maintain?

- » another is between how the communities identify their needs and communicates them to the organisation and how the organisation makes decision to respond to them. One way of doing this is to make social mobilisation an integral part of the programme which leads to institution building at the grass root level. These organisations are used to voice demands and implement projects. The programme must have the ability to generate such demand and it must have the value system which stresses and enables the organisation to respond to the needs.
- » the third fit is between the task requirements of the programme and the distinct competence of the organisation. The task requirement will consist of whatever the organisational members must do to produce inputs and make them available to the beneficiaries. The distinctive competence of the organisation comprises of the rules, structures, routines and norms which govern the organisation's functioning and the technical and social

capabilities it brings in delivering the programme. The organisation may have to deliver small enterprise programmes to address local needs. But does it have the organisational competence to do so?

Both the programme and organisation emerge more or less anew from a learning process in which research and action are closely integrated.

This is very different to the blueprint approach where needs and answers are pre-determined and an organisation is set up to deliver an inflexible set of solutions. No allowance is made for fast-changing circumstances or the imposition of unforeseen complexities which may arise once the project is operational.

The concept of 'fit' has assumed a central importance in the fields of governance and organisational design. Research has increasingly pointed towards the importance of the relationship between the variables of task, context and organisation. It is now generally accepted that the performance of an organisation is a function of a fit achieved between such variables. The better the fit, the better the performance.

Although the concept is simple, the elements that go into achieving an optimal fit are varied and complex, especially when the concept is applied to poverty alleviation and community development programmes operating in environments that are highly uncertain, and prone to conflict. The RSPs have governance and



**Both the programme and organisation emerge more or less a new from a learning process in which research and action are closely integrated.**

management systems with an inbuilt capacity that focuses on learning, participation, adaptability, flexibility and accountability all the while emphasising the needs of the people. As such, they are among the few organisations that possess an innate capacity that enables them to address the issue of 'fit' which is so essential in dealing with complexity and uncertainty.

The concept of 'fit' can be further demonstrated by the given diagram on the right.

### Responding to Complexity and Uncertainty

This paper will now examine the different kind of uncertainties and complexities the project faced at a programmatic level and will describe how the concepts underlying rural support programmes enabled SRSP to respond in a highly positive manner.

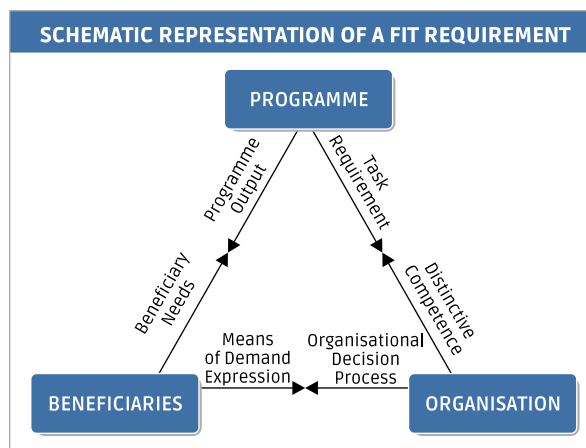
### Funding

When and how this is delivered? The first challenge the programme faced in working in FATA was uncertain funding. The endowment provided to SRSP in 2006 was a great start but there was a six month gap before any income was generated from the long-term interest bearing deposits. However, once this became available, SRSP was able to establish a small, very lean organisational structure in Kurrum and FR Peshawar, as well as a limited number of programme interventions. The small flow of initial funds enabled SRSP to put staff in place, provide training, and initiate the beginnings of a

knowledge base as well as establishing key relationships in the area.

As an interim measure, using CIDA's locally available funding provisions, small amounts were made available to initiate drinking water projects in the FR region in 2007. This further helped strengthen the understanding of the context and knowledge base and the trust in communities. Raising additional resources by leveraging international donors was critical to expanding the scale of the programme and have a meaningful impact on the lives of the people. This was slow in coming. CIDA was the first to respond and provided funding for programme expansion in 2008.

The endowment fund was critical, ensuring as it did, that SRSP was able to successfully tide over the waiting period and continue to remain focused on the objectives of the programme. Once the larger funding was available, the project had access to uninterrupted funds over a longer period. The project was then able to quickly expand because the endowment fund had enabled SRSP to put staff in place in the project area who had developed considerable knowledge of the area and trust in the communities and had capacities to respond effectively to the challenges such as the unanticipated expansion of the war to the region. The endowment provided institutional stability and long term perspective to the programme. The larger CIDA funding also enabled the organisation to save on



its endowment and provided it with a financial cushion to address other programme priorities. This allowed SRSP to expand into other FATA regions when the need and demand arose and develop a similar knowledge base. An organisation committed to the development of FATA and present on the ground with strong financial and management systems and distinct competences meant that it was strategically placed to leverage additional resources for FATA. SRSP was able to raise additional resources through UNHCR, GIZ and UNICEF to work in other parts of the region. The humanitarian programmes were particularly useful because they were the first to be started in a conflict region and with SRSP participating in them it was able to develop a good knowledge base of these areas to later initiate development projects.

It is evident that the organisational approach of SRSP has enabled it to deal with an uncertain funding situation and make the best of it by allowing it to continue

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...few organisations [...] possess an innate capacity that enables them to address the issue of 'fit' which is so essential in dealing with complexity and uncertainty.

to build its knowledge base of the project area. During this period, SRSP continued to build good relationship with the stakeholders including CIDA. The kind of funding CIDA made available was crucial in helping SRSP deal with a complex environment like FATA.

A fact of key importance is not only the availability of resources but also when and how these resources are made available. In working with communities the process of provision of funds has to support a flexible, adaptive, responsive and people-centered approach to development.

In recent years, driven in part by increasingly demanding accountability requirements, procurement rules have been forced on development programmes. These rules have given an increasing role to contractors often reducing the role of communities to the point of disempowerment, at the same time reducing the space for staff to manoeuvre in a difficult environment because of rigid procedures. A simple example are vehicles. The security situation demands that inconspicuous vehicles are used by project staff for mobility. How much flexibility do the procurement rules allow to make this possible. The CIDA programme was highly supportive in this respect and ensured that funding was available in a manner that built community trust and also ensured that their needs were addressed in a timely manner. This empowered the communities through project management, financial and procurement systems that were supportive of the ground



realities. The processes used in reaching communities were flexible and transparent and easily understandable to the communities.

### **Insecurity: unforeseen change from soft to hard areas**

The government's idea of applying the rural support programme approach to FATA, Kurrum Agency and FR Peshawar was because they were considered soft areas from the point of view of security. It was thought that it would be relatively easy to implement a programme involving civil society in these two compared to other FATA agencies.

### **Life is never easy**

In 2007, conflict flared in Kurrum. A similar situation occurred in FR Peshawar in 2010 with conflict breaking out in some pockets of the area. The situation was



**Community Activists from FR Peshawar attend exposure visit to learn from organised communities in Mansehra (June 2010)**



**...the process of provision of funds has to support a flexible, adaptive, responsive and people-centered approach to development.**

particularly serious in Kurrum where the main road was closed down for almost ten months in 2009 and 2010. This was not the only issue and overall, security became a serious consideration. In order to access Kurrum, staff were obliged to make a long and sometimes unpredictable trip through Afghanistan. In one of those quixotic happenings, members of the Peshawar Flying Club stepped into the breach. However, the club's Cessna was only intermittently available and was also relatively expensive. Although generous, it was not really a practical alternative.

### **The end result was this**

Not only was access uncertain and difficult which affected the planning and implementation of a project activities, but the costs of almost everything increased. None of this had been visualised at the time of project planning, the challenges were daunting,

and for almost any other type of approach would almost certainly have led to project closure.

And if it was not one thing it was another. While Kurrum eventually opened up, conditions in FR Peshawar deteriorated. This led to many changes in plans. Management had to be 'fast-on-their-feet' and be ready to make rapid changes such as the shifting of areas of operations and resources, changing the pace at which some activities would be delivered and adjusting the organisational structure and human resources needed to implement the project. One positive fact was that the close coordination between CIDA and SRSP meant that feedback from the field was quickly communicated to CIDA who in turn allowed the necessary flexibility to redirect resources to different areas. Without this willingness to quickly adapt to a fast-changing situation, project activities would almost certainly have grounded to a halt. The importance of being able to learn from the field as an ongoing process and to have the freedom to make rapid adjustments when necessary that were built into project design meant the difference between success and failure.

Had the project followed the standard formula of a rigid design which specified the exact area of operation, the specific number of staff who would be employed with their roles and responsibilities predetermined and with the assumption that all the complexities on the ground are already well known and catered for - the project would have grounded to a halt.

Given the absence of adequate feedback and an ability to quickly respond to changing field conditions such projects have little chance of success in complex environments.

### Road Access

An aspect usually given consideration only because of natural happenings - such as floods or landslips - access of staff to the programme area using the only road linking Peshawar with Kurrum remained an important constraint. There was simply no safe way to negotiate a road blockade maintained by armed groups who wasted no time in opening fire on any convoy that attempted to run the blockade.

Before all this happened, an active hiring programme began with most staff destined to work in Kurrum by November 2007. Staff were assembled in Peshawar for training but before they could be deployed to Kurrum, a transit convoy was attacked as it attempted to pass through Lower Kurrum. The road was immediately closed and remained so until February 2008, when the threat level was thought to have receded. However, the road stayed open only for a number of weeks until it was again subject to attacks. During the entire year of 2008, the road was only intermittently open (four times) and then usually only for a few weeks. The longest closure was between June and December 2008. The same pattern pertained in 2009. In 2010 the road was temporarily reopened but closed again for six months from July to December. Again in 2011 it remained closed



**Collaborating with the Government to organise enrolment drive campaign in Community-Based School Pato Kaley (Kurrum Agency, April 2013)**



**Flexibility in approach was crucial as was the ability of project management to make constant, almost day-to-day adjustments according to circumstances.**

for seven months, finally opening in November 2011 and it has remained open since then. This was the situation from 2007 to 2011. It was virtually impossible to predict when the road might be open which made planning of any sort a highly risky business.

The project was able to handle the fall out of this largely because staff recruited for the project in Kurrum were mainly local residents who had no reason to move out of the area except for project requirements. Had the project staff been from outside the area, the total uncertainties of road access would have posed a major challenge because of an inability to spend time with their families. In contrast to this, we found that many international organisations working in the conflict-hit Swat in 2010 had recruitment procedures which did not enable them to easily hire local staff thus posing many challenges for them.

### **Staff were not the only issue**

The road closure meant supplies were uncertain and had to take the long way around through Afghanistan. This resulted in substantial increase in cost increases and implementation delays but work nevertheless continued, although at a slower rate. None of this had been anticipated when the project was first planned in 2007. Flexibility in approach was crucial as was the ability of project management to make constant, almost day-to-day adjustments according to circumstances. A rigid project approach would have been stopped-dead in its tracks.

### **Sectarian Divisions, Access and Conflict**

Given the existence of both Shia and Sunni groups in Kurrum, the nature of the conflict see-sawed between sectarian conflict, something that was very rare in the past, and what is now known as Taliban-style insurgency. Sometimes it was difficult to determine between the two both because of the religious composition of Kurrum and because many of the Taliban groups were uncompromising Sunnis. This presented difficult and different challenges and uncertainties for the programme. The problem was this - Kurrum can be divided into three clear religiously-oriented divisions on the basis of sectarian composition and development indicators such as road access, enterprises and education.

Upper Kurrum is comparatively more developed

and contains the main town, Parachinar. About 85% of the population are Shia and 15% Sunni. The reverse is true in Central Kurrum where 95% are Sunni and only 5% Shia. Lower Kurrum is also predominantly Sunni and plagued by extremes of conservatism, low literacy rates and poor infrastructure. Taliban infiltration and influence occurred mainly in Central and Lower Kurrum.

The programme was initiated in the areas adjacent to the town of Parachinar in Upper Kurrum which is predominantly Shia. Parachinar is also the headquarters of the Agency's Political Agent. As a result, most of the initial staff were from the Shia community. Qualified Sunnis were naturally hesitant to join the programme because of the sectarian conflict in the area and because Parachinar could be seen as 'hostile territory'.

It was not until after 2011 when the sectarian conflict subsided and communication between the two communities recommenced that Sunni staff were able to be recruited and the programme was able to move into Central Kurrum. Subsequently, programme activities were extended to Lower Kurrum but the approach was gradual and incremental.

Once the programme moved into these areas, one of the first difficulties of course, was that while it was culturally acceptable for a Sunni to work in a Shia area it was much more difficult for Shia staff to work in the Sunni areas. However, as the sectarian situation improved more Sunni staff joined in making it possible to more easily operate in the

Sunni areas of Central and Lower Kurrum. In 2013, when the humanitarian crisis led to massive displacement of people in Central Kurrum, SRSP helped UNHCR deliver non-food items. In addition, experienced Sunni staff who had been 'battle hardened' in the Orakzai crisis were moved in to handle it. This provided a window of opportunity to subsequently initiate development programmes in the area under the CIDA project. The challenge of hiring local staff who would understand the context but at the same time remain neutral in face of local pressures was perhaps one of the most important aspects and is not often a factor considered in staff selection. Perhaps it should be.

Sectarian strife was not an issue in FR Peshawar but it still had its share of conflict. These flared unpredictably with considerable fall-out for the programme. Located on the outskirts of Peshawar city, the region did not have the physical accessibility problem which Kurrum had. At the outset in 2007, FR Peshawar was calm and work in the area got off to a good start with funding from the CIDA country office and internal SRSP resources.

However, peace did not last and in 2008 militancy reached the area hampering activities. The areas occupied by three of the tribes – Jana Kor, Hassan Khel and AshoKhel – remained largely accessible, but the Bora Jawaki area was entirely cut off as was part of the AshoKhel. Military action in these areas meant that the road was blocked for a month each in 2010.

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Issues of accessibility, social conflicts and diversity in the area once again highlight the important role local sensitivities play in promoting or hampering a programme.

In 2011, about 50% of Hassan Khel area became inaccessible because of military operations and in 2012 part of Jana Kor area became inaccessible. From 2010 onwards, both insurgency and conflict among tribes in FR region increased and by 2013 the security situation had deteriorated to the point that work was stopped.

Ironically, while the programme got off to a good start in FR Peshawar and faced early difficulties in Kurrum, the reverse occurred in the latter part of the project's life. This had implications on use of resources with FR Peshawar being a centre of attention in the early part of the project. These resources were then diverted to Kurrum in the latter part. Again, management flexibility concerning the allocation of resources based on the principles of 'possibilities' was essential. Had this been absent, the entire project would have been crippled.

Issues of accessibility, social conflicts and diversity in the area once again highlight the important role local sensitivities play in promoting or hampering a programme. This calls for a thorough understanding of the context. Similarly, the rapidly changing situation on the ground requires a programme to be flexible and to be able to readily adapt to changing circumstances. Serendipity, and the ability to recognise such opportunities and also seize them can also be said to be important. There is no constant in programme strategies and these have to remain emergent because there is no clear road in front which could be traversed with certainty.

### Winning Space

The FATA Sustainable Development Plan declared that civil society would be an important plank for development in the region. The concept of rural support programmes was given a green light. However, we need to appreciate that a government, like any other social system is not a homogeneous entity - different parts of it can have very different operating cultures and values.

As a result, it is no simple thing for civil society to be able to operate even in areas where conflict and insecurity is not an issue. There will always be a struggle to 'win space' and acceptance at all levels. For example, a stated government policy, in this case of supporting civil society institutions may not permeate down to local institution and grass root level. Policy statements, orders or even financial support can help but do not solve the problem.

The fact of the matter was that civil society institutions such as SRSP operating in FATA regions of Kurrum and FR Peshawar had to deal with an initially high level of mistrust and doubt at all levels from head office to the field. Civil society institutions come with many names and shapes and varying track record and performance. Many public institutions see RSP's as competitors for resources, while others believe civil institutions are also drivers for foreign agendas. The military is a prime example because their hierarchal approach to life means they understand and readily accept 'hard' programmes -like infrastructure projects,



...accessibility, social conflicts and diversity in the area [...] highlight the important role local sensitivities play in promoting or hampering a programme.

school buildings etc but have little understanding, at times justifiably so, for capacity building programmes which have no visible outputs. With the military as an important player which determines access in the region it was important that there was a balance between "hard" and "soft" programmes. Would someone sitting in London or Washington be able to understand these subtleties. Many civil society organisation lost on this count because those who designed the programmes sat far away from the region and designed programmes which were very difficult for local stakeholders to understand because many had "soft" components but no "hard" components.

Let's look at some of the local issues that the programme confronted:

### Names and Symbols

One of the crucial factors that contributes towards the success or failure of an organisation that wants to be a catalyst of change in any area is the level of trust and acceptability that it can generate within the communities. For example, AKRSP was able to do this in the northern areas because it started operating initially in Ismaili areas and had the all-important blessing of the Aga Khan. Trust was easily established although even then there were occasional problems created by local jealousies. The biggest challenge for AKRSP's management was that having built on this foundation, to then take the process forward and gradually move into non-Ismaili areas.

In case of SRSP operations in Kurrum, at the outset, this kind of trust was clearly missing. In fact, SRSP was initially viewed as just another project or an NGO that had come into the area with an agenda that was not aligned with the needs and vision of the local people.

This view was entirely understandable as there is a history to this in Kurrum.

The South FATA project funded by IFAD had operated here previously. It had a blue-print approach to staffing, social mobilisation and incorporating gender issues in its programmes. One good example of the blue-print was that it had allowed for a micro credit line of Rs. 300 million. This was never utilised because those who designed the 'blueprint' had little idea that the cost of delivery of a micro finance programme in areas which were geographically vast with low population densities was enormous. By design, micro credit was doomed from the start. Local considerations were also given little attention when staff were hired and placed. Neither were project implementation strategies nor were gender issues given sufficient thought.

This generated a lot of mistrust leading to rather drastic result when the projects offices in Parachinar, normally a center of tolerance, were burnt to the ground by local elements in 2006. This left a bad taste in its aftermath, and SRSP had to deal with this baggage until it became clear that it was an entirely different 'kettle of fish' and was highly responsive to local sentiments and ideas.

How to solve this problem?

SRSP needed a local identity in order to separate it from the negative NGO narrative that prevailed in the area. Thus in Kurrum, the FATA Local Area Development Programme was born as an initially separate entity. Once the programme had established credibility, there would be few problems in linking it with SRSP.

In FR Peshawar the word 'organisation' was unacceptable because it was linked to bad NGO narratives but the word committee was fine. These could all be seen as small steps but like so many hidden elements, they were of great help in reducing the antagonism that NGOs face in the area. The programmes which SRSP developed were a sound mix of 'hard' and 'soft', thus satisfying local communities while winning the confidence of security agencies. In developing



#### Community Dialogue in Arab Khel (FR Peshawar, March 2009)

programmes for communities. SRSP was highly perceptive to local culture and communal sensitivities. Close relationships were also maintained with government which was also an important aspect. Nothing can damage a programme more quickly and more terminally than government opposition.

**Local Staff and Local Identities** In hiring staff for the area, it was decided to emphasise people who were qualified and enjoyed social credibility in the area. The Area Manager selected for Kurrum was one who had such attributes. He was well-qualified and came from a highly respected Shia religious family. His leadership brought credibility to the programme and also helped build bridges across communities as it expanded at a later stage -



because religious elders in the two communities in Kurrum have historically interacted with one another.

In the initial days, the religious affiliation of the Team Leader was an asset because the programme could only be based in the Shia areas where he was acceptable and enjoyed wide respect. It was evident however, that the Team Leader's religious affiliation might also become a limitation when the programme expanded into Sunni areas as it did some years later. When this happened, there were still security concerns and the project manager could not easily access Sunni areas. However, as the communal situation mellowed the programme took active steps to incorporate local Sunni staff to help with the expansion. Where, for various reasons there was any unwillingness of local people to join the programme, Sunni staff who had been 'battled hardened' in Orakzai region were deployed. These staff members were originally brought in as part of a humanitarian programme in Central Kurrum which SRSP gradually transformed into a development programme.

The challenge in FR Peshawar was different. In the initial years, because of its proximity to Peshawar, knowledge about the SRSP programme had spilled into the area through community activists. Many of these well-trained community activists helped the programme make rapid early advances in the area. There was one limitation - SRSP could not find staff who enjoyed the kind of social credibility to be found in Kurrum. Instead, the programme was dependent on

staff who did not belong to the area. The social organisation unit was also based in Peshawar and not in the region because of its proximity to Peshawar. As a result, staff were not permanently based in region and did not develop the kind of close affiliation that could be found in Kurrum. While this did little to hamper the programme when things were good, when they were not and the security situation deteriorated, such staff were unable to freely move in the area. This was a decided weakness.

The proximity to Peshawar also meant that the number of projects and civil society organisations were higher in the area. This also meant that the baggage SRSP had to deal with was pretty heavy in the area and not attractive in any way.

The whole process of staff selection and placement was done according to the context. There was no organisational chart which had to be filled in advance. While there was some idea about what this should be, the programme had the flexibility to address complex issues by controlling the selection and placement of staff to meet the requirement of the local context. ■

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iteration,  
learning,  
adaption have  
to be an  
integral part of  
the project  
design and  
plementation.



**Health Awareness Raising Session  
at Government Middle School  
Towda Oba, Central Kurram  
(Kurram Agency, March 2013)**



Strengthening State-Citizen relationship: Political Administration, Agency Health Department, PPHI and Communities attending community meeting at Free Medical Camp organised in Makhraney, Central Kurram (Kurram Agency, October 2012)

## Managing Diverse Stakeholders

**F**ATA is made of many tribes with differing history and cultural variability. The difference between Kurram and FR Peshawar is rather like comparing chalk and cheese. The style and nature of government administration was also very different between the two areas. For example, FR regions do not enjoy the same importance or status in the administrative set up of FATA as do Agencies. Kurram for example is independently administered through the offices of a Political Agent located in Parachinar, while FR Peshawar is just a part of a larger administration. There are marked differences in both outlook and administrative competency which has considerable affect on the quality of the interaction between civil society and the administration. The FRs are much smaller in terms of the population they support and much more marginalised in socio economic and political life even in the context of FATA.

In our part of the world, it is rare to find the typical Weberian bureaucratic organisation with its disregard for the person and emphasis on the organisation. Instead, institutions develop on the basis of patronage and clientalism - good governance is a constant struggle to develop a congruence between the values of a society and the espoused values of the formal institutions. In such environments, individual relationships are highly important, and they can play a prominent role in making or breaking projects. Of course,

western bureaucracies are not immune to this sort of thing. They just like to believe they are.

For instance, in FR Peshawar when given support in activities like Polio vaccination, officials would reciprocate and be helpful, whereas on other occasions when, for one reason or another, help from SRSP was not forthcoming, it could lead to cooling down of relationship. This is not unique to FATA. NGOs operating in other areas of Pakistan have reported similar experiences.

Whatever the case, the careful management of the external relationships, particularly those who wield power, becomes an important and unreported part of NGOs life and can make a major difference between the success or failure of the organisation to enact development. In almost every case, outcomes are dependent on the relationships developed with the individuals manning positions of power, and the attitude of such individuals toward a project activity. These relationship had to be nurtured and maintained which is not an easy process given the frequency with which changes occur in government staff.

The programme also had a clear policy of keeping all stakeholders on board through regular interaction and sharing of information. This included government and the military, political and religious leaders and local elders of the region, as well as all security agencies. Achieving this required some



⤴ Skills training for women from Christian Community (WCO Saint Anthony) in Upper Kurram (Kurram Agency, October 2009)

agile footwork including the use of social occasions but it was important to keep on side everyone that mattered.

The work done by SRSP in Swat during the IDP crisis and Floods of 2010 played an important part in building credibility for the organisation within military. In a difficult security environment where considerable restrictions were placed on civil society operations, SRSP managed the situation well and was able to deliver uninterrupted programmes. Its policy of not exacerbating conflict by adapting the goals and objective of the project to the local circumstances and adopting an incremental approach to change in issues like programme expansion and gender issues has been very helpful.

The programme also followed a policy of keeping its work in the communities open and transparent - by having regular dialogues for initiation of project activities in any area and explaining clearly the terms of partnership to the communities. The process of recording all events on video and still photography was continued as has been traditional in the RSPs. Word in such an environment are easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. This tradition was of great help in dealing with any known or unforeseen situation.

SRSP has also been able to build on the goodwill developed via humanitarian programmes in which it regularly participates to further build trust in communities. For



⤴ Training for Village Education Committee, Community-Based School Ghazi Patay (Kurram, July 2011)

example, 47,200 people were displaced in Kurram in 2013. By partnering with UNHCR in the distribution of relief, SRSP gained a great deal of community credibility. Participation in humanitarian programmes thus has a two-edged benefit – not only is relief provided in a swift and effective manner to those in need, the organisation also benefits because of the trust it engenders. As a side issue, an organisation also gains invaluable knowledge about the area which can be used to good effect for programme interventions at a later stage. SRSP programmes in Swat - which is one of its largest programmes today - had initially started as a humanitarian programme. Similar interventions in South Waziristan also started as a humanitarian programme.

The issue of 'space' is an interesting one because it is usually overlooked and taken for granted in most project documents. However, the attainment of 'space' does not always come naturally and as has been the case in FATA and the Frontier regions, this is an aspect that is a hard-won matter. Most organisations operating in such areas seek 'space' for civil society coming through orders of the authorities. Our experience is that while that is only partly true, it also has to be earned through a great deal of struggle. ■

# Working with Government

One of the most significant aspects of SRSP's involvement in FATA was that the impetus came from the top provincial governmental levels. The first move was taken at the level of the Governor and included the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Additional Chief Secretary of FATA. This decision was reiterated in the FATA Sustainable Plan and included an endowment of Rs 200 million.

Although the MOU between the FATA Secretariat and SRSP clearly stated the role of SRSP in organising communities in order to open up a new avenue for development in the region, however there were other factors at work. In the subcontinent, the framework and policies of such agreements are also very closely linked with the personalities who put them in place. When these change so may attitudes to activities put in place by predecessors.

At the outset, SRSP's CEO was a prominent speaker at the launch of the FATA Sustainable Plan in Peshawar and was also a key guest at the launch of the plan at the donor's conference in Islamabad in 2007. The presence of SRSP's CEO underscored the importance the Secretariat attached to civil society organisation working in FATA. The FATA Secretariat also facilitated SRSP's negotiations with CIDA regarding the provision of additional resources for expansion of the plan. This included an agreement with FATA Secretariat that the endowment might be used to leverage additional resources.

Events in the field over the next few years show that the MOU with FATA Secretariat were highly advantageous to SRSP in that they provided a clear space for working in the region. However, at the operational level, the coordination and cooperation that SRSP received from a succession of Political Agents in Kurrum was to an extent uneven, but was also crucial to the expansion and success of the programme. One problem was that the turn-over of Political Agents was high. During the six year period from 2008 to 2013, no less than seven different Political Agents were posted to Kurrum. Of these, only two were very keenly involved in development while the others were less interested and tended to concentrate on administration and law and order issues.

It was a roller-coaster ride. During the tenure of the development-oriented Political Agents (in 2008 and 2012), SRSP received a high level of security and other support for its staff. Both of these Political Agents actively participated

in seminars, workshops and activities such as 'walks for peace', and issued directives to all Assistant Political Agents to support SRSP activities especially in Central Kurrum. Help was also provided to organise communities in Bazey Kaley, Afridi Kaley and Palosing Wazir in Central Kurrum. One Political Agent went out of his way to also visit the field to see projects and community schools. Similarly, the Political Agent who was posted to the area in 2012, in association with SRSP, actively promoted the education of girls and worked on a proposal to enhance their enrolment. Despite considerable work having taken place, the proposal quietly faded away once this officer was posted out.

Sometimes there were negative aspects - not just benign neglect. At the Peshawar level and for a brief period the FATA Secretariat challenged the working of SRSP in FATA by questioning the MOU and provision of the endowment because the new administration did not 'own' the idea as it had been one of their predecessor's. However, after some careful intervention by SRSP, eventually good sense prevailed.

These events clearly show that while framework and policies are important, personalities are perhaps even more important. Those who believe in a specific approach can provide a huge boost while those who do not, can act to completely stall programme activities. Even benign neglect has its downside. One of the facts of life in this situation is the need to build good rapport and relationships with the administration because this can mean the difference between success or failure of a project.

The need to build-in such considerations is not always appreciated by donors and adds another level of complexity to project development and implementation. The process of building such relationship can be difficult, delicate and complicated and is generally far from being straight forward. It may also take place at levels that are not readily seen or appreciated by outsiders. However if it is not taken into account, projects can simply ground to a halt to the bewilderment of donors. The management of such issues is one that can only be achieved by an experienced and well regarded practitioner and can be described as one of the 'known-unknowns' of project development - if it is done well it is largely unseen; but if it is done badly or not at all then puzzling blockages can occur that may well lead to project failure. ■

## Inclusiveness, Women and Peace

# HOW SOCIAL MOBILISATION WORKS

In the case of SRSP, a lot of flexibility and learning was in-built into the strategy to make it useful for the project and the area. One good example of this was the “need-based social mobilisation” funds programme.

**A**t the heart of SRSP’s work is the process of mobilising communities and building the institutions of the people. The aim is to make these inclusive and broad based. The social mobilisation process is also ideally placed to address the issues of minorities and vulnerable and marginalised groups. In a deeply conservative area such as FATA, this includes women who, more often than not, have been excluded from past development processes. In an area now deeply divided by sectarian and other conflicts, the process of social mobilisation

must also work to reduce conflict and promote harmony.

The social mobilisation process to be effective had to be incremental and learning. Most organisations follow a rigid strategy which leaves little room for addressing the diverse needs in the area. In the case of SRSP a lot of flexibility and learning was in-built into the strategy to make it useful for the project and the area. One good example of this was the “need-based social mobilisation” funds which were placed in the programme. This enabled SRSP to address health and education needs and also conflict issues which are not typically addressed in the RSP strategies because of their focus on income and livelihood activities.

### No Standard Recipe

It is a mistake to think that the social organisation process follows a standard recipe. It certainly does not but instead is a dynamic and organic process which constantly adapts to



↑ Communities inaugurate tubewell established under FLADP in Upper Kurram (Kurram Agency, April 2010)



**Women from WCP Saint Thomas attend 3 months Skills Training in Kurram Agency (October 2009)**

context and circumstances. Anyone who reads the descriptive brochures produced by various RSPs may well form the view that resultant social organisations are created by using a standard formula and end up much the same with respect to roles and composition. Nothing could be further from the truth. Resultant social organisations are highly individualistic and represent the social characteristics of a specific area – they are in fact embedded in the specific societies where they are formed and so reflect the diversity of that society. The common themes that drives each organisation are the values of inclusiveness, democracy, equality and development.

### **Adversity and Opportunities**

Sometimes negative situations can be used to advantage. For example, staff selected for posting to Kurram spent their initial months locked in Peshawar because of the closure of the Kurram Peshawar road. However, rather than just cooling their heels, staff sought out and interacted with the large Kurram population of traders and others based in Peshawar and so build trust and relationships that were subsequently of great value to the programme. These contacts were instrumental in facilitating the vital first dialogue (a precursor to the establishment of community organisations) which was held by FLADP staff on March 10<sup>th</sup> of 2008, at a site 12 kilometers from main Parachinar town at Sarah Kaley. Similarly using humanitarian work to build knowledge base of the areas to initiate development work later was a good example of this strategy

### **The Issue of Building Trust in Hostile Areas**

As stated earlier, SRSP had to work against the baggage of South FATA Project whose offices had been burnt down in

2006. The people of Kurram Agency were very reluctant to constitute community organisations in the area. Keeping this in view the strategy was adopted of initiating work in areas where the programme had some level of acceptability.

Work thus began in Upper Kurram in 2007 in Shia areas and gradually moved to the Sunni areas of Central and Lower Kurram.

In 2009 the programme was positioned to expand in Sunni areas – to facilitate this, a man from a well-known Sunni family was hired as a social organiser. The family enjoyed high social credibility in the area which was important. However, until the programme gained universal acceptability, rather than establishing an office, the social organiser used his home as a base. The programme maintained a low profile to avoid the stigma attached to previous NGO activities as well as sectarian issues. Inconspicuous vehicles were also deployed. Similarly, women staff who were hired for many months were allowed to work from their homes before the programme could establish credibility and acceptability in the community.

At the same time, a number of infrastructure projects were quietly initiated in the hostile Central Kurram which had visible and immediate impact and went a long way towards reducing hostile attitudes. Sometimes, seemingly relatively small interventions can have significant outcomes – one such was a training programme for heavy machinery operators. Ten people were involved and one of these got a job in Saudi Arabia – a highly sought after posting - on the first day after completion of his training. These small successes sent back very positive messages to an otherwise highly suspicious community. A gradual relaxation in suspicion and opposition was further helped by an improvement in the relationships between Sunni and Shia groups after 2011.

### **Grafting on the Traditional**

Wherever possible, the social mobilisation process built on traditional structures and cultural practices. One example was the establishment of savings programmes. Now savings have been an important part of all social mobilisation processes in all RSPs because this creates and then builds financial skills and discipline within the communities.

However, to differentiate this from previous NGO narratives, SRSP managers rather innovatively opted to link the savings process with the concept of a funeral fund (Murda fund). This is a widely used practice to help families deal with the considerable costs associated with funerals. In the Kurram area, the standard practice is for friends and neighbours to help sustain the family (which has had a funeral) for the three days during which the family does not cook. The fund is used to support this.

SRSP adapted and improved this system by helping the communities maintain regular registers, increasing community awareness of the existence of the fund, and by establishing open and accountable procedures. This led to the gradual acceptance of savings as a means to facilitate and underwrite other activities.

Another example was to link collective work to be undertaken by community organisations with a traditional practice termed **Pagara**. This is used to answer community needs such as digging graves, maintaining irrigation canals and so on, all of which traditionally used voluntary labour. This strategy once again helped make SRSP's work acceptable and understandable to the areas' communities.

There were many other examples but perhaps none quite so important as a notion termed **Badraga**. This is a traditional security system where a security provider takes personal responsibility for the safety of a 'guest'. This was of particular importance in allowing relatively safe movement for staff in areas prone to conflict. **Badraga** can perhaps be best described as a special bond between two people or two families, and any infringements can result in an outbreak of quite deadly personal intensity. Rarely is it infringed.

### The Entry Points

As always, infrastructure projects were instrumental in winning over community support because they were selected by the communities and addressed important needs. Infrastructure projects were used by the programme to facilitate an entry point to villages as well as bringing a community together around common issues and building their capacity for collective action. 75 infrastructure projects were initiated in FR Peshawar in 2007 and in Kurram in 2009-2013 which benefitted over 42,000 beneficiaries. Projects included the provision of clean drinking water, additional irrigation water, resulting from lining canals, and the provision of pumps, tube wells and new canals and sanitation projects.

Livelihood and enterprise development activities were also very popular and training in agriculture and livestock and poultry production was provided. Training in enterprise development was also provided and grants were given to support the start-up phase of a number of small enterprises.

Provision of regular training in community development and leadership to the office bearers of the organisations helped build their capacity and ensured that they were conversant with SRSP's programmes.

Previously, government's approach to projects was to invariably work through traditional leaders or **Maliks**. Using the **Malik** system had its advantages while it was strong and robust but as the system weakened in the region because of social and economic changes, and the gradual increase of

conflict, there was need to broaden the base for development. Involving the **Maliks** in the development process also had its disadvantages because many of them built schools and dispensaries on their properties which were of little use to the wider public. Many had also been singled out by hostile elements and some had even been killed. The project thus followed a policy of broadening the base for development.

Social organisers were instructed to pay a courtesy call on the traditional **Maliks** and to encourage them to become members of the project and audit committees. Many **Maliks** showed initial interest but as they found that the process did not hurt them in any way, or, on the other hand, provide any opportunities for personal gain, most of them left the process alone and were happy with the symbolic role they enjoyed. Religious leaders also needed to be kept on side and so were given due deference and involved in the process of social mobilisation. Efforts were made at all times to keep them informed.

Rigidity in organisational approach was discouraged. The RSPs follow a model of creating higher level organisations from base organisations. When 70% of a population is organised at the Union Council level, a Local Support Organisation (LSO) is usually formed as the next step. Given the facts of war and security concerns the social mobilisation process in the project areas was geographically dispersed. To answer this problem a system of forming networks was used. This brought together a number of organisations working in an area. These were able to benefit from economies of scale, undertake advocacy and establish linkages for the organisations.

**The Kirman Network** was the first network formed in Kurram Agency in July 2011. This was the first of the five networks formed under the project. The Kirman Network initially consisted of 984 households and significantly included 138 female members. The network took many remarkable initiatives. These included:

- » promoting women's education,
- » discouraging deforestation in the area,
- » supervising Community Based Schools (CBS schools) established by FLADP Kurram,
- » participating actively in awareness campaign against drug addiction
- » and aiding in the restoration of peace in Kurram agency.

### The Karwan Aman Development Network, Jana Kor

- In August 2011, the first Network of FR was also formed called the Karwan Aman Development Network, Jana Kor. The network was formed from twenty two MCOs originating from three khels (**Madho Khel, Shad Khel and Kohi Khel**) from Jana Kor.



**Community Activist establishes  
Mobile Repair small-scale business  
after acquiring training in Jinakor  
(FR Peshawar, April 2013)**



### Bringing in the Marginalised Groups

In May 2009, another quite remarkable process was initiated. It all began when Kurrum's Political Agent's office pointed out to SRSP that a small group of Christians and Hindus had been working at the Tehsil Municipal Administration. These had been without pay because of some bureaucratic problem. SRSP was asked to help by providing income earning opportunities to them. SRSP began by organising the men of the community but quickly found willingness among the female community members who also wished to take part in the process. During dialogue with these minority communities which also included Sikhs, SRSP discovered a quite remarkable individual (Maria Salamat) who started work as an activist but soon graduated to a professional level, becoming a community resource person and finally a female social organiser.

As a result, in July 2009 the first women community organisation was formed in the Christian community. In December 2010, eighteen months after the programme began, the first women organisation was formed in the Muslim community. This opened the way for formation of seven women organisations in the next seven months.

### Problems faced in Involving Women in Development in Conservative Communities

The initial poor response from communities for forming women organisation was due to the traditional well-known reasons - women were unwilling to move far away from their homes because of the strict purdah restrictions. To overcome this problem, the project changed its strategy and women's interest group comprising of a few neighbours were encouraged to come together. Rather than a larger organisation, this group was treated as a basic unit for social mobilisation.

Once women's interest groups had received organisation and leadership training, they were encouraged to initiate small enterprises through grants. This new strategy saw the rapid expansion of women's involvement in the project. By December 2012, there were 385 women members and the following quite significant achievements had ensued:

- » 384 women organised in 108 Women Common Interest Groups (WCIGs)
- » 67 different kinds of small enterprises established for 201 women in Lower, Upper & Central Kurrum Agency
- » clean drinking water provided to 451 women
- » dairy farming training provided to 120 women
- » 55 women were given training in natural resource management activities
- » skill training was given to 110 women
- » 11 female resource persons received training
- » 1015 girls are now being educated in 14 Community Based Schools
- » free medicines and treatment provided to 7652 women across the Kurrum Agency through Free Medical Camps and MCH (Mother Child Health Days)

In FR Peshawar, there was great resistance to working with women. In 2011, after many years of effort the people were convinced to allow female training provided this took place in their houses. As a result, training in tailoring and layer farming was started using resource persons from Peshawar and some from within the community. However, things came to an abrupt halt. The formation of interest groups was making steady progress in 2012 when a religious edict was issued to kill NGO staff working with women. This of course, led to closing down of the women programmes in FR Peshawar, a problem that the programme has to live with and adjust to when working in such areas.

### Health Needs

The social mobilisation process was broadened to include health and education needs of the community in Kurrum. The small enclave of Bushara comprising of 263 Sunni households. Located only nine a few kilometers from Parachinar, a Sunni island in a sea of Shia communities, Bushara had been cut off and isolated for four years because of communal tension. Because there was little or no access to health services of any kind, contagious diseases were rife and maternal and child mortality was unacceptably high. In March 2011, with the assistance of the Agency Health Office and the Administration, the area was brought into the mainstream again. Medical camps were organised and some 924 women and children received free treatment and medicines. Earlier, in September 2010, the first medical camp to be initiated by an NGO in FR Peshawar was organised by SRSP.



**Education Comes to Village**  
**Haqdara: the first CB-School opens**  
**on Pak-Afghan Border (Kurram**  
**Agency, April 2012)**



**Schools and Community Support**

Education was used as an important tool for mobilising communities. Establishing community schools in remote areas began in 2011 in both Kurram and FR Peshawar. Seminars and teachers training programmes were initiated.

A seminar organised in 2012 involved the participation of more than 470 most prominent elders from all three tehsils of Kurram Agency. This was a golden opportunity for SRSP/FLADP – all stakeholders were taken in confidence to discuss peace interventions in Central Kurram. SRSP invited Muftis (the top Islamic scholars) from both the sects to address the forums. This helped build bridges between the two communities and won acceptability for SRSP/FLADP within days. Kurram office began to receive invitations from Central Kurram to work in the area. Soon after, three community schools were established at Central Kurram. This was a victory for peace and good sense achieved through the community organisation process.

The diverse strategies followed for social mobilisation enabled SRSP to establish community-based schools at Guidu, Haqdara and Speena Shaga on the Pak/Afghan border to provide quality education to the communities at their door steps. Because of the poor literacy rates it is difficult to find local teachers to teach in these schools. However, as of this date there are more than 350 students attending community-based schools in these areas; significantly, many of whom are girls.

**The Magic of Music**

It may not sound much but in fact it was a peace tournament that was organised by SRSP/FLADP in Kurram Agency with the help of the Kirman Network. Astoundingly, more than 3000 people turned up from all parts of Kurram Agency, many of them players and musicians. This was the first time

that anything like this had happened since April 2007, where people from different schools of thoughts got the opportunity to interact with each other in one joyous forum.

There was some apprehension about the possible reactions to the music that was to accompany the physical exercise show to be given by students. However, when this show started, members of all communities broke out into spontaneous dances letting out the steam that had been bottled up through the many years of communal tension. The whole thing turned out to be a marvelous milestone for FLADP and SRSP through recognition at all levels.

The peace tournament lived up to its name and contributed towards the restoration of peace in the area. SRSP received letters of appreciation from Government and was able to develop and improve upon linkages with the elders of Central Kurram. Whether this was linked or not, soon after the staging of the peace tournament, SRSP gained access to Central Kurram as well.

This occasion also broke down many other barriers – for the first time for many years, elders of both communities, Sunni and Shia, visited each other's homes to offer condolences for dear ones lost during the period restoring ties that go back many centuries.

All this can be perhaps traced to one fact – the provision of funds in the project for discretionary 'need-based' activities. As a result, funds were able to be opportunistically used to support youth development, medical camps, education conferences and gatherings such as the peace tournament. ■

**Inter-School Peace Tournament organised**  
**for promoting social cohesion in Kurram**  
**Agency (October 2011)**



# Monitoring and Evaluation

**A**n essential element of the RSP movement, monitoring and evaluation remained a challenge in this environment mainly due to restricted access. Staff from SRSP's head office were never certain of access, nor were monitors from CIDA. To complicate matters, by necessity, both SRSP teams included female members which required special provisions. Nevertheless, they and CIDA monitors were able to make a number of visits.

Difficulty is the mother of invention so considerable use was made of photographs and videos to monitor progress of the project. Other methods were also deployed. These included the independent verification of data derived by staff of progress in larger infrastructure projects by the members of the administration. Different events were organised to gather feedback such as, regular community meetings, feedback from clusters and inviting community activists to gatherings of communities outside the area to present stories.

In addition, the views of all stakeholders were constantly sought as a further check on what was being reported. A number of participatory studies were undertaken to assess the institutional maturity of community organisations, impact studies of infrastructure projects and most significant change studies undertaken with a wide body of the community as tools to generate data for evaluation. The project aims to use tools like 'Outcome Mapping' in the future as tool for evaluating progress and change in behaviour. ■



**Before and After of irrigation channel constructed by communities in Kurram Agency**



# What Do We Learn?

The principle of subsidiarity which is widely practiced in SRSP management also allows local teams to take the context of any situation into consideration when planning and executing projects.

It is clear that the complexities that arose in this project were simply not evident at the time the government asked the RSPs to begin work in FATA. Indeed at the time of the meeting between the RSPs and the Governor in 2006, the government side had remarked that the decision to select Kurrum and FR Peshawar was because these were soft areas where SRSP would be easily able to demonstrate its work. Even before, SRSP teams could be moved into Kurrum, events had overtaken them with militant attacks on the convoys of Lower Kurrum in November 2007. Over the next three and a half year, the road to Kurrum was barely open sometimes remaining blocked for over half the year. This had serious repercussion for project but it was not brought to a halt. On the other hand, a standard project based on an ex-ante analysis of needs and with clear project outputs and outcomes linked to a blueprint approach would have found the going very rough.

The project initiated by SRSP was able to address and manage these issues in part because the team were locally based and adapted to the environment. The principle of subsidiarity which is widely practiced in SRSP management also allows local teams to take the context of any situation into consideration when planning and executing projects. The key function of plans under this environment was not to elaborate details of the future situation but to provide a guide for decision making throughout the course of the intervention.

Similarly the sectarian nature of Kurrum and its implication for the project in event of communal conflict, the negative narratives against NGOs which were widely prevalent in the area because of the behaviour of past projects could not be accounted for in an ex-ante analysis. The project was able to address these issues by paying close attention to ongoing learning - much of the knowledge that informed resultant action only emerged during implementation.

Planning was also done in terms of short learning cycles. There were periods when the work in FR

Peshawar was rapid so attention and resources were focused there. But when the situation in Kurrum improved and that in FR Peshawar deteriorated the process was reversed. The selection of villages to work in, the process of interacting with communities, the selection of staff keeping in view the religious and cultural affiliations, and the interesting changes in the women's programme were all based on learning - changes were made incrementally. No blueprint could offer any help in such circumstances.

Of key importance was that the process was helped by the active collaboration of the CIDA team based in Islamabad. This team had a good understanding of the fast-changing problems faced by the project and was willing to give space to the project to interpret information. The CIDA team also helped develop a sense of ownership.

The experience gained by SRSP working in FATA highlights the importance of 'emergence' as a tool for developing strategy.

Relying on the blueprint approach in an environment like FATA simply does not work. Unfortunately we live in a period when evidence-based and result-based management and value for money is the rage. In all these approaches the goals, objectives and targets have to be rigidly predefined. Now this project to an extent also had a logical framework and result-based management matrix. But close coordination between CIDA's team based in Islamabad enabled the project to focus on outcomes while being flexible about the activities to help reach these outcomes. Learning loops built within the project through regular feedback from the field, discussions with CIDA officials and determining a response and flexibility in implementing them enabled SRSP to deal with the situation.

Simply put, as a result the project has managed to proceed. Had the blueprint approach been used or insisted on, it would have failed.

And this is the lesson this paper wishes to convey. ■



NFI Distribution to IDPs from Tirah Valley,  
Khyber Agency at Jarma Distribution Point  
(Kohat, May 2013)



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# PROGRESS SUMMARY SHEET

Activity/Training	Kurram		FR Peshawar		South Waziristan	Bajor Agency	Mohmand Agency	Jalozai Camp	Orakzai Agency	Cumulative Achievement
	CIDA	Endowment	CIDA	Endowment						

## A 1: Community Institutions & Networking

Formation of MCOs	42	54	96	40	13	10	20			275
Formation of WCOs	8	2								10
Establishments of Networks	5		4							9
WCIGs Formation	108									108
Capacity Building Support for WCIGs	20									20
Basic Activist Training (BAT)	100		110		16	6	36			268
Leadership Management & Skill Training (LMST)	50		55	80						185
LMST for Network	5		4							9
Capacity Building Support for Networks	5									5
Capacity Building Support of Networks in Conflict Resolutions	5		4				20			29
Manager Conferences	11		16							27
Activist Refresher Course	40		55							95
Exposure Visits	5		7							12
Need Based Social Mobilisation Activities	16		1							17
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>9,339</b>		<b>4,917</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>556</b>			<b>15,407</b>

## A 2: Community Physical Infrastructure

Establishing community managed infrastructure	38	31	37	51	3		9			169
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>19,488</b>		<b>21,824</b>	<b>688</b>		<b>1,800</b>			<b>43,800</b>

Activity/Training	Kurram		FR Peshawar		South Waziristan	Bajor Agency	Mohmand Agency	Jalozai Camp	Orakzai Agency	Cumulative Achievement
	CIDA	Endowment	CIDA	Endowment						

### A3: Improving & Restoring Livelihoods

Livestock Extension Workers (LEW) Training	60		85							145
Agriculture Extension Workers (AEW) Training	100		65							165
Livestock Management (LMT) Training	95		75							170
Diary Farming & Milk processing & Marketing	120		90							210
Artificial Insemination	-		80							80
Refresher Course & Conferences	12		-							12
Research & Demo (Live Stock & Agriculture)	77		177							254
Exposure Visits	12		7							19
Natural Resource Mgt (NRM) Based Enterprise Training	560		503							1,063
Vaccination & De-worming Techniques	25		45							70
Micro enterprise Training / Skill Training	130	40	93	20	15					298
Employable Skill Training for Community Activists	151		40							191
TOT of Enterprise for Community Resource Person	16		4							20
Micro-enterprise Establishment	144		30							174
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>4,466</b>		<b>6,457</b>	<b>15</b>					<b>10,938</b>

### A4: Policy Advocacy & Linkages for Pr-Poor Development

Seminar		1								1
Coordination Meeting	8		3							11
Disaster Management & Preparedness Training	70		30				20			120
Exposure Visits	2		2							4
Training on Need Basis	185		45							230
Cross-Border Visits and Learning Exchange Programme										
Publications (Poster, Advertisement, Brochures, etc)										
Participatory Evaluation										
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>888</b>		<b>276</b>			<b>20</b>			<b>1,184</b>

Activity/Training	Kurrum		FR Peshawar		South Waziristan	Bajor Agency	Mohmand Agency	Jalozai Camp	Orakzai Agency	Cumulative Achievement
	CIDA	Endowment	CIDA	Endowment						

#### A5: Improving Access to Social Sector Services

Establishment of Community Based Schools (CBS)	14		4							18
Teachers Trainings (General & Subject-wise)	3									3
TOT for Women Teachers	1									1
Village Education Committee Trainings	85		35							120
Intervention related to Health Sector	26		13							39
Intervention related to Education Sector	21		3							24
Exposure visits	4		2							6
School Endowments- One Time Grant (OTG)	14									14
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>24,149</b>		<b>9,901</b>						<b>34,050</b>

#### Humanitarian Activities (Funded by UNHCR)

Temporary Shelters		400			1,910					2,310
Food Items		425			33,267					33,692
Provision of tents					2,444		324			2,768
Non-food items					9,615		1,501	40,000	30,200	81,316
Winterization Kits							2,500	13,000	5,125	20,625
Voluntary Return		2530			4,343	1,400		2,015		10,288
Registration (Enlisting)					40,572					40,572
<b>Beneficiaries</b>		<b>5,955</b>			<b>92,151</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>58,660</b>	<b>55,015</b>	<b>74,767</b>	<b>287,948</b>

<b>Total Beneficiaries</b>		<b>64,285</b>		<b>43,375</b>	<b>93,193</b>	<b>1,656</b>	<b>61,036</b>	<b>55,015</b>	<b>74,767</b>	<b>393,327</b>
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\* TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: 393,327 , this includes multiple counting





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