

The Development of Rural People: Myths and Approaches

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Most rural populations in underdeveloped countries are poor, no matter how one defines poverty. The rural poor are neither a homogeneous group, nor is the incidence of poverty equally distributed among them. They do, however, share the underlying causes of their poverty. Landlessness (or absence of productive land) and poor prospects of employment at low wage rates are among the major factors. In some regions, the natural and physical environment exacerbates the conditions of poverty, even if the poor have reasonable entitlements to land.

The prospects of improved living conditions for the rural poor depend on many factors. The major ones seem to be (a) population growth, (b) technical progress, (c) markets, and (d) public policy environment. The contribution of each of these factors is not easy to identify, because they act on the human condition in an interdependent and complex way. In most underdeveloped countries, the forces of market and government policies tend to work against the rural poor.

A "diagnosis-prescription" approach to alleviate rural poverty is often based on the outsiders' arrogance about their knowledge of the rural poor. Rural development, as a strategy to improve the well-being of this group, is premised on the outsiders' views and perceptions. The poor themselves are rarely a part of the strategy: they do not participate in providing information, in making decisions, and in managing the rural development projects or programmes. In fact, some development programmes increase their powerlessness and vulnerability to both physical and economic environments.

The rural poor are a peripheral people like their counterparts in urban areas. The rich in both places are at the centre. There is, however, one big difference: the urban poor can share with the rich some of the services and facilities that the rural poor have no way of accessing. This is partly because of the indivisibility of these

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services and partly because of the capacity of the urban poor to organize and agitate. The rural poor do not have the rich living in their midst; nor do they have the capacity to organize because of their isolation, division, etc. Added to this is the fact that industrial growth is concentrated in urban areas fed by the agricultural surplus produced by the rural poor.

This paper will first discuss briefly three major approaches to rural development. It will then focus on an organizational model of rural development, with emphasis on its conceptual foundation and its practical implications for the relatively homogeneous and differentiated agrarian structures. An interesting experiment underway in the Northern Areas of Pakistan will be used as an illustrative example.

THREE MODELS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

How can the rural poor acquire greater control of their physical and social environments to improve their living standards? The answer lies in their access to opportunities to exploit the potential they have rather than their own exploitation and dispossession in the process of development itself. The difference of approaches to the development of rural poor is based primarily on the division between theoretical perspectives about the causes of mass poverty and the sources for its alleviation. Three conceptual models have been used in analysing the issues related to rural development: (1) the individualist model, (2) the communist model, and (3) the organizational model.

The division between the individualist and communist models is embedded in the mutually exclusive ideologies of development. The former has its roots in the classical and neoclassical theories of private and "free" market as the only rational vehicle to improve the material welfare of rich and poor alike. The latter is premised on Marx's critique of the classical theory and favours abolition of private property in the means of production. Private property and markets are seen as the basic cause of division of society into antagonistic classes and observed inequalities of income and wealth. The organizational model is sceptical about the ideological claims of the other two models. It favours neither pure individualism nor pure collectivism. Its claim is that the pooling of individual endowments or resources within a cooperative framework, particularly among the poor, would avoid the costs inherent in the other models of rural development.

A brief description of the three approaches to rural development will not be out of place here.

1. The Individualist Model

This approach is premised on the capitalist ideology of private property and markets. Economic development is based on the argument of efficiency through private initiative and competition in the marketplace. The individual's interests are

assumed to be the source of society's progress. In fact, most of the institutions of the society are explained by market-like transactions. Contracts between capitalists and workers (or between landlords and tenants) are explained within this framework. Poverty and riches are likewise explained by either the principle of free choice or as a consequence of asymmetrical information and meddling by the state in the economy. What is needed then is to free the market forces for greater production and better distribution of material welfare in the society.

In too many underdeveloped countries, capitalist agriculture is now emerging both in what were basically "feudal" and "peasant" agrarian systems. Even in African countries, in which a communally based agrarian system had historically existed, foundations have been laid for the development of capitalist agriculture. The development of a capitalist agriculture, based on the forces of private (and free) markets, is seen as a fortuitous circumstance for the alleviation of poverty among the majority of rural and urban people.

However, the process of adjustment is not without disturbing consequences. The displacement of peasants and their transformation into landless wage workers outside agriculture is a costly personal and societal phenomenon. Slums of the poor and enclaves of the rich in urban areas are only two of the major manifestations of the development process through this route. Should the rural poor wait for the promised "trickle down" effect of the invisible hand of market? There is much evidence, now and in the past, that the answer to this question cannot be in the affirmative.

2. The Communist Model

The communist model is based on Marxist ideology, in which private property in the means of production (particularly land and capital) is seen as the basis of the rich-poor dichotomy. Abolition of private property and its replacement by collective ownership and management are regarded as the only assured foundations for harmonious social and economic development. There is, however, no general agreement about the nature of collective control, particularly of land and labour.

The Russian collectivist model, practised in several communist countries, has been plagued with problems of inefficiency because of excessive state control without autonomy to the peasants. The Chinese commune system, a variant of the Russian model, faced similar problems. Recent changes in the collective and commune systems — particularly the long-term leasing of land by the state to the individual and cooperatized peasant households — reflect clearly the weaknesses of a centralized regime to rapidly improve the living conditions of peasants. This change in several communist countries is part of the attempt at freeing the economy from state control. It must, however, be noted that some of these changes are cosmetic. But if they are real, as apparently is the case in Yugoslavia and China, they produce serious contradictions between the ideology and practice of communism.

3. The Organizational Model

In the organizational model, the institution of private property in land is not abolished. But the rural poor are encouraged to manage their individual and common resources through cooperation. Common property in pastures, forests, orchards, etc., where it exists, is managed communally within a system of reciprocal obligations. A participatory mode of organization also allows for pooling labour, buying and using inputs like seeds, fertilizers, machines, pesticides, acquiring loans and credit, and marketing farm and household surpluses. There are two basic advantages of this approach: (1) it reduces the vulnerability and isolation of the individual households and (2) it fosters the development of an equitable and self-sustaining socio-economic system.

How well the organizational model works depends on one crucial condition: that the agrarian structure is relatively homogeneous. In the highly differentiated land systems — with high concentrations of land and capital — how can the rural poor be organized and pool their resources for their own development? Can the model be adapted to the existing structure and still deliver its claims? Put it differently. How can the rural elites also benefit from it?

In countries where a communist or collectivist model has not been accepted, there is considerable debate about the impact of the individualist and organizational (cooperative) approaches to rural development. We should briefly look at some of the major issues in the debate.

THE DEBATE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The individualist or capitalist approach can exist in both the feudal and peasant agrarian systems. In the feudal system, broadly defined, the landlord lives mainly on the rental income appropriated from the output of land produced by the sharecropper or tenant. The existing distribution of land-ownership excludes the tenant from access to its use without the landlord. In the peasant system, small parcels of land with family labour are the basis of production for the household and the market.

Given these agrarian structures, the introduction of capital and technology both by the forces of market and government policies create new pressures on both the landless tenants and small landowning peasants. Their displacement from the land becomes a necessity for development! They must look for work as wage labourers, mainly outside agriculture. Their entitlement to land as a source of income is lost. Steady employment and a reasonable wage can now be the only sources of sustenance. In the capitalist development of agriculture, the process of adjustment is often quite costly both for the dispossessed and the society.

Rural development in the individualist approach is a catchphrase, usually devoid of content. If its objective is to provide opportunities to the rural poor

for improving their living standards, it must depend on the organized and collective effort of this group. But a collective or cooperative effort requires certain conditions that usually run counter to the interests of the rural elite. How can the small farmers, tenants and landless workers organize to articulate their needs and mobilize their resources for higher standards of living if the elite see either little gain or much loss in rural development?

In communities where most rural people are land-poor and live in a harsh or isolated environment, there is usually a long and well established tradition of cooperative or collective behaviour for survival. They know that the management of their own meagre resources and of common property in the village must depend on reciprocal obligations. They are well aware of the price of waste and of the benefits from economies of scale. Outside intervention with emphasis on articulated needs and a cooperatively organized management of resources can bring about new choices for these rural people. These choices are not imposed on them, but are made available in response to their collective demands. This can unleash a self-sustaining and equitable process of rural development, because the outsiders would be involved on a self-liquidating basis.

Alleviation of rural poverty in an agrarian system based on the highly unequal endowments of land and capital poses a far greater challenge for the practitioners. Should we insist that rural development under these conditions is highly unlikely, because the rural elite will either resist or subvert the programme by which they either gain little or lose much? Should we first make a "frontal attack" on the distribution of land itself, because it is the basis of inequities both now and in the future? If radical land reforms – such as were introduced in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea after World War II – are not on the agenda, should we conclude that no strategy of rural development would work? Should we become negative and even cynical? Or should we perhaps still try to provide to the rural poor a framework in which they can organize for their self-improvement? Is there a gain-gain scenario for the rural elite and the poor?

The frontal-attack approach, if it succeeds, can lay the foundation for rapid rural development through cooperative resource management within a private property system. The basic problem in many countries is that the rural elite are too well entrenched to give up the basis of their economic and political power through genuine land reform measures. The chances of radical change in the agrarian structure are slim in normal circumstances. Political upheavals and foreign interventions are perhaps the only major sources for restructuring the existing land system.

In the absence of land reforms, the challenge to the rural development practitioner in this system is both immediate and intimidating. It is immediate because the transformation of a bimodal system through technology and markets displaces the peasant and increases the ranks of the poor in rural areas. The challenge is also

intimidating, because the practitioner has to find a strategy by which the rural poor can gain without the loss to the elite. In other words, a feasible model of outside intervention for the rural poor within a cooperative framework in the bimodal land system is not easy to develop and manage.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

At the conceptual level, the organizational model involves three basic components: (1) a programme, (2) prospective beneficiaries or participants, and (3) a support organization. The success of this model depends on "a high degree of fit between programme design, beneficiary needs, and the capacities of the assisting organization" [Korten (1980), p. 17]. In other words, the model is responsive to the expressed needs of beneficiaries through a strong organization capable of making the programme work. The concept of fit used by Korten in the context of rural development is central to the understanding of why some programmes succeed and many do not. Underlying this notion is the assumption that it is best achieved through learning and not by following a blueprint or plan.

The fit between the participants and the programme involves their needs and the specific resources and services supplied as programme outputs. Of course, beneficiary needs will depend on the social and political context of the village. The supporting organization's fit with the beneficiaries is determined by the means used to express the needs and the ways in which the organization responds. This will include the capacity to organize and to make decisions in response to the expressed needs that galvanize the beneficiary organization. Finally, the fit between the organization and the programme involves activity requirements of the programme and the competence of the support organization to deliver inputs for the programme outputs. The technical and social capabilities of the support organization are the critical factors in playing its role effectively.

The concept of fit and the learning approach are the basic ingredients in a successful programme of rural development. The learning approach greatly helps in achieving the desired fits because there is always some specificity or uniqueness in the circumstances and timing of a programme. While the general principles stay in tact, the adjustments required would have to be in the programme packages for specific target groups or regions. For example, what may work for a rather homogeneous community of the poor living in an isolated and harsh environment would not be workable in a community which is highly differentiated on the basis of endowment of assets like productive land and capital. In the first case, there is probably a long tradition of reciprocal obligations of the member households to survive in a hostile physical and natural environment. In the second community, the interests are fragmented, depending on one's position in the rural hierarchy based on the ownership of land and related assets.

An effective fit is seldom achieved in those rural development programmes that have followed a blueprint approach, guided mainly by fixed ideas and run by centralized bureaucracies without the participation of intended beneficiaries. The examples of failure in Pakistan are too many to mention. A heartening experiment, however, is underway in at least one small region of the country: The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gilgit, Chitral and Baltistan. Its operation is based on several critical conditions:

1. The rural poor as individuals (or as individual households) lack the capacity and resources to make a dent on their hostile physical and social environment.
2. The poor know their priority needs, but within a system of constraints in which the choices are limited or even non-existent. They can well define their needs and are prepared to mobilize their resources.
3. The poor must form a legitimate and credible organization in partnership with a support organization of outsiders. The organization of the poor must be based on equal participation by the members.
4. The partnership of the two organizations must be based on reciprocal obligations, of which the primary obligation is of the poor to establish equity capital through whatever initial saving each member can contribute to the common fund. The other part of their obligation is to establish an executive committee of individuals in which the members have total confidence about managerial skills and which is accountable to them.
5. The entry point for the support organization as a catalytic agent must be determined by a clearly identified need of the village organization. The purpose here is to invest in activities that will have an impact on the welfare of the target group on a continuing basis and around which the members can be glued to the organization. Individual involvement and participation in the collective or common infrastructural and productive activities is a basic condition for success.
6. The institutional capabilities in the village are built before introducing technical change by identifying the activists who are willing and able to work with the organization.
7. The support system should aim at packages of inputs and services for the village organization that it can manage and that have a direct impact on productivity and equity. The members should develop specialized skills usable for the benefit of all.
8. The support system should not create dependence of the poor on outsiders, but create conditions that make the process of development self-sustaining without outside support.

9. The organization of the poor should become a vehicle to act as a pressure group to demand from the institutions of the state those services and infrastructure that it cannot establish by its own resources.
10. The last important assumption for the AKRSP model to work well is that it uses a trial-and-error approach. It is not a project, but a process based on mass participation and a flexible management model. A rigid, bureaucratic and centralized management approach with a fixed *ex ante* design or plan is a sure way to failure.

A schematic working of the AKRSP model is depicted in Figure 1. The support organization performs two basic functions: it provides a social organizer as a catalyst to the village organization to develop itself around at least one major activity or project that the members need and in which they can all participate. The other function is to provide a one-time grant for the physical infrastructure project and some technical assistance in developing expertise about the use of agricultural inputs at the village level. Similarly, the village organization plays a double role. First, it glues the members around a commonly-needed project by pooling labour and savings from the households. The emphasis on building equity capital through saving is a central part of the experiment. It helps in binding the members together and in using it as a collateral for acquiring production loans from the banking system. The other role of the village organization is to build capacity for undertaking activities in production and marketing through the joint efforts of its members. The programme around which the support organization and the village organization work normally includes (a) building a physical infrastructure project, (b) increasing savings and investments by the member households, (c) introducing new inputs and activities through technical training, and (d) developing the capacity to plan at the village level.

One of the important reasons for the success of AKRSP has been its "capacity for responsive and anticipatory adaptation". This capacity has been built on three important criteria:

- (1) The management of AKRSP "embraces error", which reflects effective leadership. Workers are encouraged by the leadership to discuss openly all issues and to admit errors, so that the lessons can be used to improve their effectiveness. They use mistakes as a "vital source of data for making adjustments to achieve a better fit with beneficiary needs" [Korten (1980); p. 19].
- (2) It plans with people, building on what the villagers know and the resources they possess. There are several advantages of this approach. For one thing, the outside intervention opens new options without imposing methods or

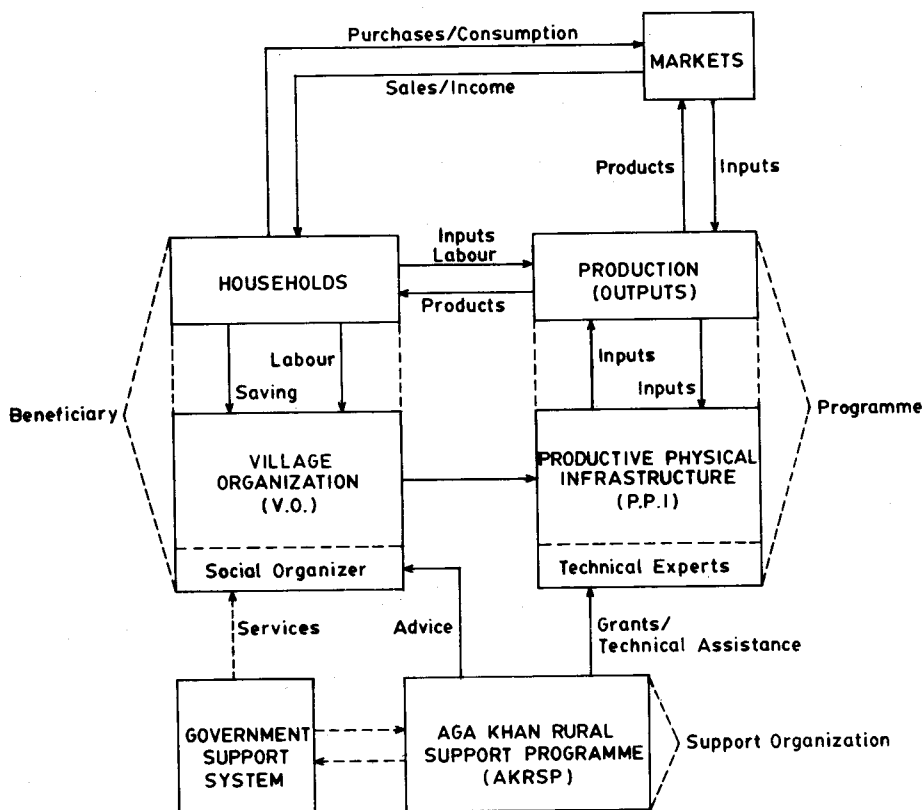


Fig. 1. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme Model

technologies that the villagers cannot integrate into their socio-economic environment. It builds new capacity without increasing the risk of failure and dependence on outsiders.

- (3) It links the building of knowledge with action: it emphasizes "learning by doing". There is a high degree of integration and not differentiation in the roles played by planners, technical experts and managers. The programme is highly interactive not only among these cadres within the organization but also with the village organizations. It allows the organization to achieve rapid and even creative adaptation of its activities in response to the organizational capacity of prospective beneficiaries.

A recent evaluation by the World Bank of AKRSP activities in Northern Areas of Pakistan shows the impressive success AKRSP has so far achieved in building a viable model of village organization. Efforts are now underway to evaluate the impact

of the AKRSP intervention on the living standards of rural households. This evaluation may also reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the production model that AKRSP has been developing in recent years.

The AKRSP model of rural development raises two sets of questions. The first set has to do with the future of the programme in Northern Areas. When do the village organizations become self-reliant or need no external support from AKRSP? What organizational structure at the regional level would be necessary for the village organizations to develop their capacity for planning at the village and regional levels with the support of their members? These questions are important because (a) the AKRSP organization and donor agencies have to determine the need for future funding required for the programme and (b) the village organizations have to find a viable institutional structure which helps them expand their work at the regional level. However, there are no simple answers to these questions. The AKRSP and the village organizations are at present discussing various options for the future. It must be added here that even the most successful village organizations have not yet acquired the capacity to develop village-level plans for better utilization of common resources. It seems that building this capacity would be one of the important conditions for future stability and growth.

The other set of questions deals with the *replicability* of AKRSP model or its extension to other regions, say, of Pakistan. Can this experiment be tried with success in a variety of physical and social environments? This question is even more difficult to answer than the ones raised earlier about the future of AKRSP itself in Northern Areas. At one level, one can argue that the term replicability is inappropriate in this context. The emphasis should instead be on the general concepts in the approach that can be adapted to specific requirements of the diverse socio-economic environments. Some have argued, and in my opinion wrongly, that the AKRSP experiment is in some basic sense unique and cannot be applied as a general model of rural development.

Three arguments have been advanced in support of this position. First, in Northern Areas a vast majority of the people were equally poorly endowed with land and other assets and that there was a vacuum created by the disintegration of the previous system based on *mirs* and *rajahs*. Second, the leadership of AKRSP is charismatic: it possesses qualities not commonly found to promote effective organization and cooperation. Third, the AKRSP experiment is expensive in terms of resource requirements from outside.

The first argument requires further analysis, but the other two can be readily dismissed on the basis of empirical evidence. There is nothing charismatic or super-human about the AKRSP leadership. It has followed a management style which is open and flexible; emphasizes partnership with the villagers; willing to learn and adapt; and maintains incentives attractive enough for high quality personnel to work

in harsh and remote areas. The AKRSP experiment is not expensive. The World Bank estimates that its cost per beneficiary is favourably comparable to other rural development projects which are not as successful. Attempts are being made to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the programme at the regional level.

Let us look at the first argument in some detail. The argument is that AKRSP has done well in Northern Areas because of some fortuitous circumstances available there:

1. There was little economic and social differentiation in the population: most rural households were poor and faced similar circumstances of the harsh natural and physical environment.
2. With the disintegration of the traditional hierarchy ruled by the *mirs* and *rajahs*, there was a vacuum at the village level for an alternative organizational structure to take hold.
3. There was a long history of cooperative behaviour (based on reciprocal responsibility) in the village population because of the particular physical and economic environment.
4. The long association of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKRSP's parent organization) with the people of Northern Areas had already prepared the ground for AKRSP to work effectively.
5. While the government's bureaucracy and administrative structure were nominal, creating few barriers for AKRSP's work, there was unusual support and attention of the government in recent years in the form of the road system and funding for various subsidies.

All of these "special" characteristics may have played a role in creating a favourable environment for AKRSP. However, the most important among these seems to be the relative economic and social homogeneity of the village population. The absence of a traditional local authority and the weak or nominal existence of the state bureaucracy is also an important factor. Therefore, the real challenge to the AKRSP model is posed by those communities or regions, say in Pakistan, where the village social structure is highly differentiated: the population is divided on the basis of inequality in land distribution and caste or primordial loyalties. The problem becomes more serious if the government also has an entrenched bureaucratic structure aligned closely with the interests of dominant groups. What will be the basis of organization for the rural poor? What is the entry point for a support organization? What strategy will have to be followed to promote rural development with or without the active support of the existing elites? What relationships must the support organization establish with the existing bureaucracy of the state?

The *a priori* response to these questions by some is that the AKRSP model will

not work in these environments because it would lack the capacity to plan and make adjustments. This response is not valid because it rests on several assumptions which turn out to be more apparent than real. For one thing, there are successful examples in several countries of this approach to rural development even in the highly differentiated village populations. The major condition of success is the capacity of the model to adjust, provided the state bureaucracy becomes less interventionist and more supportive in its role at the village and regional levels. The real test of the AKRSP approach would be in designing and implementing the programme on a *pilot basis* at the village and regional levels in other parts of Pakistan. An alternative approach recently recommended by the National Commission on Agriculture (NCA) rests on the existing institutional structure of village representation with "support" from the civil bureaucracy. It is apparently based on the belief that an organizational structure tried earlier in somewhat different forms by various regimes in Pakistan will have a better chance this time in helping the rural people develop themselves!

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Comments on “The Development of Rural People: Myths and Approaches”

In his lecture Professor Khan describes three models of rural development which he labels the “Individualist model”, the “Communist model” and the “Organizational model”. He favours and explains in more detail the main features of the organizational model. Especially he relates this model to the organizational structures and practical experiences of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, which is seen as very successful and whose experiences should be used on a larger scale. As I have no knowledge on this particular programme I will restrict my comments on the other parts of the lecture.

A main argument for the “Organizational model” is seen in the fact that very often in developing countries an attack on rural poverty which drastically redistributes land or wealth and resulting entitlements is often not possible due to the prevailing political structure.

This should not, however, lead to pessimistic or even cynical resignation but to a different approach in which the situation of the rural poor is improved without making the landlords worse off, thus avoiding their hidden or even open obstruction. This starting point for a viable strategy against poverty might seem very optimistic. But I appreciate much this peace-meal approach to change conditions marginally and within given institutional frameworks. In this respect one should remember that in most industrialized countries, where absolute poverty is not a problem any more, this result was neither obtained by economic growth alone nor by a drastic redistribution of wealth but by a combination of different techniques that have many features in common with what Professor Khan calls the organizational approach.

I had, however, some difficulties to follow the individualistic and the communist model as explained in the lecture. The individualistic model is seen as a concept in which individual interests are assumed to be the source of the society’s progress. This is equated with classical and especially neoclassical economics. Neoclassical economics can today be regarded as the standard model of economics. But it is surely not a model which fosters an unfettered market economy or capitalism. First of all neoclassical economics is a tool of analysis which – unlike classical economics – makes use of the marginal calculus and has proved to be useful for the analysis of a vast amount of micro- and macro-economic problems. Moreover, neoclassical welfare economics has proved that a market system under certain conditions leads to Pareto-Efficiency. But the social state of Pareto-Efficiency does not tell anything about distributive justice. An efficient market system in the neoclassical

world is compatible with a social state in which few enjoy all luxury and many live in absolute poverty. Never has any neoclassical economist proved or pretended to have proven that the free market system can wipe out poverty. One should keep in mind that economists as A. K. Sen, who are well aware of problems of poverty and inequality, have widely used the neoclassical approach as an analytical tool. This approach, which in fact is based on an analysis of individual behaviour and can therefore be called individualistic, is much wider and much more powerful than the narrow concept of laissez-faire capitalism as an engine of overall prosperity. These two concepts should therefore not be mixed up.

Professor Khan describes the Marxist or Communist model of development on the basis of the rich – poor dichotomy. Again, I do not agree with his view. The main concept of Marxism is exploitation of the working class. This concept has little or nothing to do with the concept of poverty as it was developed in modern development economics. On the contrary, the concept of exploitation presupposes a worker, who gets a subsistence wage which allows him and his family a cultural standard of living above the level of absolute poverty.

To my knowledge Marx himself did not work extensively on poverty. There are some bits and pieces, especially in “Das Kommunistische Manifest” of 1848 in which he predicted the impoverishment of the working class. But this was a view which he held before starting his work as a professional economist and which he later on did not uphold. Rural poverty in developing countries is in Marxist terms not so much a result of exploitation but of a situation in which even exploitation does not take place in the sense that a subsistence wage is paid.

Prof. Khan develops some basic features for the organizational model of rural development, some of which may lead to deficiencies of the working of this model. Thus, it is proposed that the organization of the poor must be based on equal participation by all members. On the other hand, it is postulated that each member should provide equity capital to the fund through whatever initial saving he or she can contribute to the common fund. Now assume that one member can contribute 20 Rupees, another member 200 Rupees. In this case the equal participation of all members may lead to free rider problems which have been widely discussed in the economic theory of organizations. I think it would be worthwhile to introduce into the organizational model some dose of the economic theory of institutions as has been developed by Oliver Williamson and others. To make organizations workable it is better to base their main features on maximizing behaviour of their members rather than on a concept of altruism which at best works within very small groups.

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Comments on
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The paper presented by Professor Khan can be taken as consisting of two parts. The first part provides a description and analysis of three models of rural development, while the second one offers an analysis of one particular type of organizational model currently being implemented by a private non-governmental organization (AKRSP) in northern Pakistan. The following discussion is accordingly divided into two parts.

The author's hypothesis of the ultimate demise of the small farmers and the peasantry in Pakistan, and even in land-surplus countries around the world, merits closer scrutiny. Pakistan's agricultural census data pertaining to the distribution of operational holdings of land appear in fact to point in the opposite direction, that of the strengthening of the operational holdings of the small farmers in the 1970s after a difficult period in the 1960s. This may have been chiefly due to the observed trends in the 1970s of the small farmers to rent *in* land when their own holdings were considered insufficient. Many small farmers in South Asia and in other parts of the world have harnessed the productive and divisible technology of the Green Revolution, after a time lag, just as effectively as the larger farmers, and, by achieving increases in incomes, have managed to strengthen their position relative to the larger farmers. Research work undertaken by M. Ghaffar Chaudhry over the past few years in rural Pakistan tends to confirm this alternative view.

If we view the differences between small and larger farmers as getting smaller through the process of renting *in* land, the more critical issue in rural Pakistan then becomes the plight of the landless, exacerbated by increasing population pressures and the consequent subdivision and fragmentation of land-ownership. Unfortunately issues of landlessness in Pakistan have been rather neglected in comparison with scholarly output in India and Bangladesh. This is clearly illustrated by the unreliability of estimates of landless people in the country, which vary from one million in 1976 (Griffin and Khan, 1972) to three million households in 1972 (Nassim, 1981).

To emphasize the point made above, the individualist model is here to stay as shown by the resilience of the small farmers. This of course does not argue against land redistribution. On the contrary, asset redistribution is the most effective way of assisting the landless in rural Pakistan which, according to some very rough estimates, may constitute over a quarter of the rural population of the country. Neither does

the above point argue against the organizational model of rural development, which can be harnessed to further increase the development of the small farmers. It merely points out that the organizational model is not a prerequisite for the development of the small farmer.

Turning now to the second part of the paper, the author has provided an analysis of various elements responsible for the achievements of what he regards as a successful rural development intervention, following the organizational model, and taking place in northern Pakistan. The author does not however give a sufficiently convincing account on the methods and quantitative measures used by him to evaluate success, such as comparison with base-line data on project and non-project villages, increase in household incomes and living standards, and so on.

Assuming that this intervention has been successful, two additional general comments are offered in the analysis of additional factors which may have contributed to the project's outcome. First, an important factor may have been the knowledge by the people in the target districts and villages of the continuing nature of outside support. The name chosen for the intervention, "Support Programme", perhaps best illustrates this point. In other words, a short-term or medium-term project, even of 5 to 10 years' duration, may be unlikely to elicit the same commitment from the target population. AKRSP has gone on for the last 6 years and there are no signs of this support diminishing in the foreseeable future.

In this context it is well worth referring to the agricultural development experience of small farmers in Japan, which among other things, made ample use of an alternative organizational model in the form of 'multipurpose cooperatives'. Services included the promotion of farmers meetings, provision of technical knowledge, provision of credit both in cash and in kind, marketing services in the form of purchase of agricultural produce and supply of agricultural inputs, and storage facilities to the farming community. Here also an important factor, and perhaps the most important ones, was the continuing nature of the cooperatives. In both cases the catalytic agents of change, the support organization of the core of the AKRSP, and the agricultural cooperatives, are perceived as permanent institutions by the rural community.

A second factor which requires further probing is the nature of the interaction between the newly created village organizations and the existing village councils and leadership. Both the author and an earlier interim evaluation (World Bank, 1987) too readily admit that the newly created institutional structures were being set up in villages characterized by a total power vacuum. One however, expects that some form of organization in the village must have been in existence if only for the fact that a number of households lived together in the form of a village community. There may be important lessons to learn from the terms under which the new village organizations were allowed to be set up, how they interacted with the existing power

structure, no matter in what shape and what strength, and whether they eventually absorbed, replaced or worked in parallel with the existing power structure.

Finally a third factor requiring deeper investigation is the relationship between government institutions and a non-governmental organization such as AKRSP. Despite their names these organizations may need as much if not more support from the government, particularly at district and local level, than project interventions sponsored by bilateral and international organizations.

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