

SOCIAL SECTOR POLICIES UNDER SAP

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In Pakistan, the allocation of responsibilities between levels of government is governed by legislation, and is spelled out in the Constitution and provincial Local Government Ordinances/Acts (LGOs). An analysis of these tells us two things. First, other than in the federally administered regions, the provincial and local governments are the main providers of basic social services. Second, the allocation of functions is quite liberal and unlikely to restrict attempts to devolve functions to local institutions.

Barriers to devolution are more likely to be presented by financial resources (owing to existing patterns in the allocation of fiscal powers and intergovernmental fiscal relations); human resources (owing to problems in quality, remuneration and motivation); reluctance to devolve power (owing to a lack of political will and the urge to draw economic rents); weak institutional capacity; and the use of antiquated systems and procedures.

These barriers have functioned to concentrate responsibility in the higher levels of government. The federal government has taken over tertiary health care, tertiary education and population planning, and the articulation of social development policy. The provincial governments have taken over local services, such as primary education, basic health care, and water and sanitation services.

With no explicit constitutional existence, the lowest tier of government can be superseded at the discretion of the provincial governments. However, social sector services are grassroots services which need to be provided at the local level by effective and continuous local governments. This can only be guaranteed by amending the Constitution (as India has done) to ensure that local councils cannot be set aside by the provincial governments, that they have a list of distinctive responsibilities, and that they have the resources to fulfill these responsibilities. This may require

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creating an arrangement similar to the National Finance Commission (NFC) which sets out the resource-sharing arrangements between the federation and the provinces every five years.

Most of the provinces have developed (either formally or informally) some policies in each of the sectors for implementation as part of the SAP. These are generally the same across the provinces in their broad goals and objectives but vary from province to province in detail only.

1 POLICIES IN THE PRIMARY EDUCATION SECTOR

Education policies in Pakistan have been formulated every so often by the federal government and more often than not the provinces have been consulted only cursorily. Except in rare instances, the first education policy in the late forties, national conferences, seminars or group discussions are not held. Draft policy documents are circulated and comments invited, and the time given for comments is minimal. The targets and goals set by the federally determined policies are ambitious and bear little relationship to the resource availability of the provinces, the capability of their Departments of Education to deliver or the needs of education demanded by the markets. Moreover, there are no policies/policy statements regarding primary education formally approved in the provinces. A review of the aide-memoirs issued by donor missions preparing, appraising or reviewing the performance of education projects and the provincial operational plans governing the implementation of the Social Action Programme point to certain understandings between the donors and the provincial governments which may be termed as the initial steps in the policy formulation process.

Some key commitments made by the provincial governments for the implementation of the first phase of SAP are listed below along with a statement of whether these commitments were met. Many of these commitments have spilled over into the second phase also:

Site Selection Criteria: all new schools (specially girls schools) will be constructed only in those areas where a prospective local teacher is available (*marginal implementation*). To enhance primary education, a 50:50 ratio will be maintained between the construction of new schools and addition of classrooms to the existing ones (*invariably violated*). In addition, 60:40 ratio will be set for girls versus boys schools to further enhance female education (*not undertaken in most areas, district-wise distribution of data not*

available). Where possible, a second shift will be introduced in the existing schools to make better use of the existing facilities (*the lack of teachers has inhibited this; rules to permit additional payment to teachers for the extra shift not even drafted*).

Supervision of Schools: provincial governments will carry out studies of a single system of educational administration (*coordination mechanisms not established: studies not undertaken. VECs/PTAs established without studying possible implications: trial and error implementation mechanisms adopted*). Other measures will include creation and filling of posts for Learning Coordinators (1 per 15-20 schools) and Assistant Sub Divisional Education Officers (1 per 40-50 schools); and improving their mobility by providing adequate transport facilities and fixed monthly travel allowance (*partially implemented; vehicles used by higher levels of bureaucracy*).

Supply of Teachers: proposed reform measures will include rationalisation of teachers supply and expansion of GCETs (*partially implemented*); merit based hiring (*conspicuous by its absence*); relaxation of age limits and qualifications for rural female teachers (*only to favour politically nominated persons*); recruitment of retired male teachers for girls schools (*only in very rare instances*); complete ban on transfer of teachers during mid-year and within 3 years (2 years in unattractive areas) of service at one school (*violated routinely*); and involvement of community and DEOs in the hiring process (was this supposed to be a joke).

Non-Salary Portion of Recurrent Budget: the recurrent budget for non-salary expenditure will be raised by 10% per year (in real terms after adjustment for inflation) to enhance the supply of educational materials, teachers guides and supplementary material (*not done owing to resource crunch, particularly after the NFC Award 1997*). A standardised package of classroom instructional material will be developed and made available at the beginning of the academic year (*invariably supplied after the first terms in most instances: some receive this on paper only*). The entire recurrent budget amount will be released at the beginning of the fiscal year to ensure timely utilization (*because of the uncertainty of transfers from the federal government this is not done: when done. authorisation is given, but releases are withheld*).

Community Participation: SAP emphasises the involvement of community based organizations (VECs/PTAs) in school affairs as a centre-piece and not as a peripheral activity. Community participation will be advocated in all phases of primary education: identification and selection of potential school sites, selection and hiring of school teachers, supervision/monitoring of schools and teachers performance, and repairs and maintenance of school buildings. The VECs/PTAs will be constituted with greater representation from among parents. NGOs and the private sector will also be involved in the formation/constitution and strengthening of these VECs/PTAs to have them effectively involved in the school management process (*partially implemented in letter but not in spirit and that too for the start of Phase II of the donor funded SAPP-II: as experience is gained changes are being made: however, the Teacher's Association in Punjab have challenged the formation of these committees ostensibly because a legal lacuna exists regarding their formation: it is alleged that the real reason is that salary payments would be linked to certification of performance and attendance by these bodies*).

A school mapping exercise will be carried out for all provinces which will result in a master list of potential school sites based on local needs (*completed only in a few regions, and where completed is a closely guarded secret not available to most even within the departments*).

It is ironic that the primary education sector which was allocated bulk of the total SAP budget, has no clear cut policy (formal or informal) even after seven years of SAP. Some of the commitments made were not honored and some only half-heartedly. For example, 10% of the schools survey did not exist while an additional 15% did not meet any of the selection criteria.² The single education administration system, the school mapping exercise and community involvement have received very little or no attention by the governments. In fact, school management committees or village education committees were created through notifications (in complete incongruity of community mobilization/organization process).

²The Auditor General of Pakistan, 1996, *School Site Verification Survey*.

There has been no mention of private sector involvement in the primary education although an estimated 5,000 or more primary schools are being run by the private sector with an enrollment of over 10% of the total students in the country.³

2 POLICIES IN THE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SECTOR

Unlike the education sector which has had a history of formulating policies over the last fifty years, the health sector policies are conspicuous by their absence. The beginnings of policy statements can be found in the Five-Year Plan and Perspective Plan documents which contain statements of targets and goals, but not objectives or implementation mechanisms. Apart from the general overall SAP policies pertaining to all SAP sectors, only targets and strategies (not policies) were developed for the health sector and these were only at the national level. The SAP goal for the health sector was to provide efficient and reliable health services, particularly those relating to maternal and child health care with emphasis on rural areas, by establishing a strategic planning mechanism (planning cells, involving related departments, prioritising problems and optimising allocation of resources) and organising primary health care (PHC) financing and services. The strategy was to consolidate and improve the utilisation of health care facilities to deliver family planning services and enhance community involvement. The strategy for population welfare was to establish a renewed focus based on clear priority, unequivocal political support and increased visibility resulting from a strong information, education and communications campaign, service delivery network and crash training programme and to integrate this with health care services.

These targets and strategies were not transformed into policies in the provinces. This was unfortunate as policy reform in the education and water sectors provided a focus for dialogue and guidelines for implementation and could well have been used to create the synergy required to make SAP successful. Instead, the focus fell on issues rather than process. These included:

- ' The excess of un-staffed BHUs. Although provinces were able to slow or even stop construction by health departments until proper planning was put in place, they were unable to stop the MNAs/MPAs building on their own.

³*The World Bank, 1996, Improving Basic Education in Pakistan.*

- ' The need to reorganise primary health care and to decentralise planning, management and administration to the district level. This has been viewed largely as an administrative issue but actually calls for major efforts in capacity building in the districts.
- ' Low non-salary components of the provincial non-development were increased under donor pressure for increased expenditures but with little analysis or understanding of the optimal balance between salary and non-salary components, or control of leakage.
- ' Lack of monitoring and evaluation received little attention. Government responds to these needs by creating special monitoring cells without recognising that monitoring is an essential part of mid-level management.
- ' Unlike the water and education sectors; community involvement, partnering with NGOs and use of the private sector received little attention in the health sector.

However, as stated above these are issues rather than policies. Clearly there is a need to establish rational policies at the provincial levels and from there, operational strategies and work programs need to be developed with focus on the process, particularly in capacity building.

3 POLICIES IN WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

In 1988, a National Water and Sanitation Policy Conference was held in Islamabad where a policy statement was agreed upon by all PHEDs and LGRDDs. This preceded, but was commensurate with SAP policy. Individual provincial policies in the water sub-sector were encouraged at the beginning of SAP and all provinces had policies by the second year of SAP. These policies were a desirable beginning but fell well short of providing adequate guidelines and avoiding loopholes; holes which special programs and directives quickly found and used to evade the policies in all provinces.

The following is a summary of the key points drawn from Punjab's Policy:⁴

⁴*Government of Punjab, 1993, Punjab RWSS Policy Statement.*

- ' For all new schemes, the desire of the beneficiary community to participate in the design and O&M will be ascertained and an agreement formalised with the community before beginning the work. MPAs will help form the user groups for taking over the O&M of the scheme after completion.
- ' For existing schemes, PHED will mobilise the community through NGOs, users associations, local bodies etc. For in-operative schemes, PHED will rehabilitate them before handing them over to the community.
- ' Subsidies will be provided by the provincial government to assist communities pay for O&M. The amount and time frame for the community to assume full O&M responsibility will be spelled out in the agreement with the community.
- ' PHED will strive to involve the community and incorporate its needs/desires in modifications in the design of the scheme. Plans, designs, costing and technical details will be presented to the community for selection of the final option. PHED will provide technical assistance and training to the community.
- ' The community will open a bank account, deposit two months O&M expenses and designate a caretaker for the scheme.

These points are also the core points for the policies in each of the other three provinces, and also in the Federal Areas and in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. All policies termed themselves "uniform policies" meaning that they were to be applied across the board regardless of the source of funds for schemes. But, in fact, the MPA/MNA Programmes and special directives from Chief Ministers and others circumvented these policies from the beginning. Furthermore, these "uniform" policies could not be applied uniformly. PHEDs' understanding and capacity to transfer schemes (including thousands of existing schemes) were very limited and nowhere near adequate (even if properly partnered with NGOs) to cope with the tasks set by the uniform policies. PHEDs are purely technical departments and continue (with minor exceptions) to lack the skills needed to implement full scale community management programmes.

All provincial policies focus almost entirely on PHEDs, almost to the exclusion of other important departments i.e. P&D, Finance, Local Government, Rural Development, Health and Education. These can and must play important supportive roles. The need to involve the LG&RDDs in the process has finally been recognised by the multi-lateral agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and they have been included as a partner organisation in the Second Phase of SAP, however, only peripherally and only to serve the notions of "appropriate low-cost technology. This has occurred largely as a result of laid back advocacy by UNICEF and LG&RDDs, and a more aggressive stance adopted by the opponents to the development philosophy adopted by civil society organisations.

It is only since late 1997 that policies for the sanitation sector have been adopted. Prior to this the definition of sanitation adopted by the PHEDs for the rural areas was the drainage of accumulated water (including the grey water from kitchens), and that too in the larger settlements. The concept of household sanitation facilities, or the removal of solid waste was not even conceived of.

SAP policies focus on social development. But provincial water and sanitation policies concentrate on tapping community resources. That is, their primary objective is to transfer financial obligations from government to community. This is an understandable and necessary objective but not the only one. Sustainability will only be achieved if community/social development is included as a parallel objective. There are several other issues which remain unanswered in the existing policies which are no less important. These are:

' **Subsidies:** the need for subsidy is widely over-estimated by line departments. Subsidies are mentioned in the policies but there are no criteria, procedures or limits placed on them. Politics being what they are, this is bound to result in loopholes, leakages and problems.

' **Major repairs:** while communities are willing to pay for minor repairs, costs of repairs sometimes (although rarely) rise to an extent which communities sometimes (although not often) find difficulty in raising. Most policies are silent on the question of major

repairs..... and also the extent of rehabilitation which should be provided before transferring the schemes.

' **Time taken for scheme completion:** schemes should be completed within two or three years. Yet due to political pressures for funding elsewhere, most schemes are taking five and even eight years to complete. This debilitates the community participation process. Policies do not address this issue.

' **Ownership:** policies are silent on who owns the scheme once transferred. Ownership leads to questions about registration of water committees as NGOs, major repairs and if necessary the disposal of the facility. Water supply schemes should become the property of the management committee which itself should be broad-based in representing the user community and should be formally registered.

' **Continuing support:** experience in community management has shown that continuing support to water committees for at least a year following hand-over is absolutely necessary. This is not addressed in the policies.

' **Integration:** The operations of UNICEF's efforts in hygiene education and excreta disposal through the LGRDD is not considered to be part of mainline SAP activities, even though these are integral to improving the overall public health and quality of life of civil society.

4 COMMENTS ON SAPP II

The Second Social Action Program Project (SAPP II) will continue to support Pakistan's Social Action Program launched in 1992 to continue to reform its very-weak social services in elementary education, primary health, rural water supply and sanitation, and population welfare. The overall goal of SAPP II is to improve the quality of social services, and to increase practical access to and use of these basic services, particularly for women and girls and more generally for the poor. For SAPP II, the cross sectoral objectives focus on improving quality, efficiency, sustainability and governance issues such as inappropriate interference.

It will follow a broadly similar approach to SAPP I with changes in emphasis based on experience and lessons learned through delivery and implementation. SAPP II will work mainly with government but will also strengthen NGOs and private sector efforts through fostering government/NGO/private sector partnerships, and establishing mechanisms to directly support these efforts. This will be done through the Participatory Development Program for which the design, scope of work and evaluation of proposals have been decentralized to the provincial level with input from all stakeholders. In the SAP cells, committees with line department, NGO and private sector representation will be formed in each province to evaluate incoming proposals from NGOs and the private sector, as well as line department proposals for proactively entering into contract with NGOs. Technical support will be provided to these committees by the Federal SAP Secretariat, the MSU and from the TA component of the project.

While all line departments will carry out data collection, validation and analysis and prepare quarterly review/progress reports and annual operational plans, the broader monitoring of SAP with focus on inputs, processes and outputs will be the responsibility of the Federal Planning Division through its SAP Secretariat. The Secretariat will coordinate with SAP Cells in the provincial P&D departments and Finance Department SAP Coordinators. In addition, independent parties will undertake third party monitoring of specific governance related activities and to monitor progress during the course of SAPP II. Third party validation will also be conducted to monitor the extent of community participation and NGO/private sector involvement in the delivery of social services. The PIHS will be considerably strengthened in order to develop capacity to handle the increasing requirement of monitoring and to enable analysis of poverty/distributive effects of SAP.

In addition to capacity improvement interventions associated with NGO/private sector participation and monitoring an evaluation, technical assistance and training will be made available during SAPP II to the central and implementing line agencies involved in SAP. This will be done to strengthen their planning and management capacity, assist with implementation problems and develop SAP related projects.

On the outset, SAPP II has not much to offer in terms of innovation. The very reasons that led to the failure of SAP I have not been addressed while designing SAPP II. It is not clear from the

initial documents as to how social sectors delivery will be decentralized and depoliticized: the very factors that resulted in inefficiency and wastage during SAP I. The only positive development in SAPP II is the agreement to decentralize the operational components of the Population Welfare Program to the provincial level. Another positive development is the bringing on board of LG&RD departments into SAP.

An enhanced PDP may expand the role of NGOs and to some extent, will bring in the private sector (an important partner) but this will mainly depend on the selection criteria and procedures for funding negotiations and contracting. The process is underway and efforts are being made to involve all the stakeholders in the design and implementation of PDP.

Institutional capacity building is a fundamental requirement if the objectives of SAPP II are to be met. Quality improvements in essential social services will not be achieved without building the institutional capacity of the departments through which these services are delivered. Decentralization of management functions and increased involvement of communities will require changes in the way in which the social sector departments work. Capacity to implement these changes will have to be built. Policy reforms and related activities under SAPP II must be matched to the capacity of the relevant institutions to implement them.

The third party monitoring and validation is another improvement over SAP I. The performance claimed by government sources during SAP I was negated by an independent survey conducted by SPDC/SPO. To ensure that results achieved are realistic and credible, the role of third party is of paramount importance. Governments in Pakistan have been known to cook data to suit their requirements and please their donors. It is about time that an independent source will be used to validate what happens in the field and also monitor some of the crucial elements of service delivery.