**GROWTH OF VOLUNTARISM THE NON –GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The growth of voluntary organizations in Pakistan is attributed to a conscious and deliberate strategy by the Government to encourage people’s participation in its efforts to establish the needed social services. The resultant enduring partnership between the public and the private sectors has been clearly illustrated in the foregoing chapters under various fields of social welfare activities, that is, community development, child welfare, women’s development, health, education and the disabled.

The birth of Pakistan was not as easy as was expected. While the shock made many aware of stark realities and brought with it the courage to face them, for some others, the process of reorientation was painful and a number of social and psychological problems were created. It was against this background that social work and social thinking developed in the early stages. The period from 1947 to 1951 was marked by a great upsurge of spontaneous effort to cope with an immediate national crisis, the second, from 1952 onwards, was marked by an appreciation of the difficulties involved in transforming spontaneous goodwill into organized, long-term social service, unspectacular but systematic.

At the time of the creation of Pakistan we had inherited a few voluntary welfare organizations most of which served the destitute, the blind, the hard of hearing, and the sick. There were practically none directed towards the prevention of social ills. In the words of Miss Elmina R. Lucke, the first UN adviser on Social Welfare, ‘these organizations had creaking, antiquated machinery. They were small charities that had sprung up in response to specific needs, emergency or otherwise. In 1953, the city of Karachi had over one hundred agencies registered for philanthropic purposes without counting smaller religious groups which took care of their own needy members.’

It was soon realized that a new country such as Pakistan, struggling to cope with numerous social and economic problems with limited resources could not provide all social services based on the Western model and that it was imperative that people participate in the process and share this responsibility with the government. Moreover, it is the basic function of social welfare to help people to become aware of their own problems and to build their capacity to cope with them. It was considered essential to help people to organize themselves and activated to take their fate into their own hands, and to recognize social services according to their needs through the process of ‘self-help’.

Therefore, the task of translating this ‘basic function of social welfare as defined by the UN advisers, into reality, became the first priority of the government. This was done in two ways: by initiating a process of community development in which communities were encouraged and guided to organize themselves to solve their own problems by creating awareness and through self-help, and by providing financial support to voluntary organizations to help them to help themselves.

The development of voluntary agencies was, therefore, an important assignment of the trainees of all the in-service social welfare training programs throughout the country. Later, it became and still is, a part of the curriculum in the universities for training of professional social workers. As a result, they were required to develop voluntary organizations in every field of activity in which they were employed. As Community Development Organizers they were to organize community councils and to start local level services on a self-help basis according to community needs, and thereby supplement government efforts. In the field of medical social work they created supporting community services by organizing TB associations, and services for the disabled, and others mobilized communities for child welfare and women’s development.

Thus, a process of mobilization of people to organize themselves into voluntary agencies was set in motion by the government through its functionaries which has continued to gain momentum with every passing year.

In addition to these planned efforts, people also responded to the needs of the time by spontaneously organizing themselves into voluntary groups. The existence of thousands of refugees who were occupying roadside footpaths, and open spaces without sanitation and water led several communities who had migrated from India to organize themselves in order to help their less fortunate members. As a result, the Bantwa Memon Association, the Okhai Memon Association, the Punjabi Soudagaran-e-Delhi, the Rajputana Welfare Association and many others were born. Even though they had ethnic and linguistic origins, their services were available to all; however, they mainly looked after the affairs of their own communities, thereby substantially contributing to the refugee resettlement efforts by the government. Starting their services from small refugee colonies, many of them have now grown and expanded their services into giant networks of modern hospitals and educational institutions.

In addition to these community groups many people organized themselves relief agencies to help the refugees overcome their daily problems. They distributed clothes, food and medicines, established schools and health centers and provided free medical aid and other services. They also expanded over the years and developed into large national organizations.

Many NGOs come into existence in response to the social problems created by the influx of refugees after partition. Some of the most outstanding are APWA, the Muslim Women’s Association. A few other large, well-established organizations such as the YWCA, YMCA, the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the Ida Rieu Poor Welfare Association. etc. had existed since before.

By 1953, more than one hundred such voluntary agencies were functioning in Karachi, with smaller numbers in East Pakistan, and parts of Punjab.

At this time, the government was demonstrating the benefits of organizing backward communities through its Urban Community Development Projects to undertake community development in the old slums of Lyari, Malir and Khadda in Karachi, Kayettuly in East Pakistan, AND Misri Shah in Punjab, as well as in the refugee colonies of Karachi. These efforts were aimed at bringing about social change by creating awareness amongst the communities about their conditions, and encouraging them to take charge of their own situation and make plans to improve them.

**THE EMERGING NEEDS**

As the movement of voluntary organizations began to take root and as their number began to swell, four major needs emerged.

They were:

* The provision of financial support to the voluntary organizations in order to strengthen them,
* Co-ordination of their efforts so as to avoid duplication and a common platform to exchange their experiences,
* To give them a legal status and regulate their work and activities specially of fund raising, and
* To build their capacity to run their organizations on modern lines.

So far as the financial support was concerned, it was provided by the grants-in-aid program started by the National Council of Social Welfare in 1956. It encouraged and strengthened the programs of voluntary organizations by providing grants to hire trained persons to run their services.

**Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961**

By 1960, after many discussions and debates about the benefits of enacting a law for the regulation and supervision of voluntary agencies, the draft legislation was sent to the Law Department and thereafter to the President for his assent. The Ordinance was formally promulgated in 1961, and applied uniformly throughout Pakistan.

It defined a voluntary social welfare agency as ‘an organization, association or undertaking established by persons of their own free will for the purpose of rendering welfare services in any or more of the fields mentioned in the schedule and depending on its resources on public subscription, donation or Government Aid.’

The scope of the activities of voluntary organizations cover more than twelve specific human welfare subjects ranging from children to the elderly and from coordination to training of volunteers. Under this wide spectrum they could operate in any development or remedial services after getting registered with the government.

The law was widely welcomed as it provided legal status to voluntary agencies as well as contained provisions against malpractice. The law is still operative and enforced. All voluntary organizations in Pakistan are required by law to register under this ordinance. The international agencies operating in the country are, however, excluded from this law.

**The Role of International Agencies**

The international agencies which had started working in Pakistan soon after independence the United Nations and all its affiliated organizations such as UNTAA. UNICEF, the World Food Programme, these as well as the international, non-government organizations such as the Asia Foundation, and the Ford Foundation also lent their support to these conferences and seminars and assisted with grants, books and generously supported the voluntary organizations individually.

It would be seen that the decade of the fifties was a momentous decade during which the foundation of large voluntary organizations were laid. It was also during this period that the government provided a lot of impetus for the growth of the voluntary sector as well as created an infrastructure which would sustain the growth in an orderly and systematic manner.

**The Role of Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies during the Wars and Other Emergencies**

The voluntary organizations played a significant role during the two Indo-Pakistan Wars (1965 and 1971). Articles worth millions were collected and dispatched for the war victims and their families. The members collected donations and contributions in cash and kind and substantially contributed to the war effort which brought them into the lime light and enabled the government to recognize the potential of organized welfare services in the private sector. This recognition is evident form the fact that during the two martial laws, voluntary social work was regarded as a qualification for getting nominated to the president’s appointed national assemblies and ‘Majlis-e-Shura’. For many social workers, membership of a voluntary social organization, became a stepping stone for achieving political ends.

The grant-in-aid program of the national and provincial Councils continued to increase and enlarge its scope leading to a steady growth of social welfare organizations throughout the sixties and seventies. Several other factors also played a significant role in accelerating the growth process.

**Official Patronage and Availability of Zakat Funds**

As discussed earlier, for almost a decade (17979-89), General Zia ul Haq patronized the cause of the disabled and encouraged and supported religiously motivated voluntary organizations. All of them received generous grants form Zakat funds for construction of buildings, purchase of modern equipment and vehicles and setting up Madaris (religious schools). This provided an impetus to may persons to organize new agencies in the private sector. By 1989, the number of agencies working for the disabled in the private sector rose to fifty and in the public sector, to 105. The decade of the disabled gave more such opportunities to the specialized organizations to liaise with each other and improve the quality of their services.

**The Women’s Week, the International Days and the Decades of the Child, the Women, and the Disabled**

The events celebrated during the observance of the Women’s Week in 1975, led to the formation of many women’s organizations in the private sector. The programmes, conferences and seminars held during the Decade of the Child similarly provided impetus for the child welfare organizations to emerge, thereby creating a trend towards specialized services for women, children, the disabled, and those needing specialized remedial care.

**Preparation of a Model Constitution**

The number of voluntary agencies was steadily increasing but they were concentrated in the urban areas leaving the rural villages and small towns unserved. Inorder to help the villagers from voluntary agencies in their areas and get registered with the Government Social Welfare Department, It became necessary to prepare a standardized constitution that could be adopted to their needs.

In 1968, the government of West Pakistan prepared a model constitution as required under the registration Law. The Government of Sindh also prepared similar models and translated them into Urdu and Sindhi languages in 1970. This measure simplified the process of registration of voluntary agencies and helped specially the rural people to form organizations.

**The War in Afghanistan**

The Afghan War in the 1980s had a lasting effect on the rate of growth of voluntary agencies and resulted in their transformation. During this period, Pakistan became the conduit for arms supply to Afghan fighters. The war also brought an influx of millions of Afghan refugees into Pakistan. This attracted a large number of international relief giving agencies which started operating in the NWFP and in Islamabad. According to some reports, there were 136 representatives of international organizations stationed at Peshawar. All of them had to work with one or the other government agency or local voluntary organization. It was then that they encountered bureaucratic delays and pressurized the government to allow them to work directly with the local organizations without going through government channels. The advantage of working directly with the local agencies and by-passing the government was seen as being a far more efficient method which showed quicker results. Many International donor agencies, therefore. Started their programs, especially in the fields of family planning, rural development, sanitation and clean water projects, education and health sectors. In the mid-eighties, the government agreed to allow international donors to directly fund the local organizations of their choice on terms dictated by them. International funding began to flow in generously. A UN study showed that the largest number of voluntary agencies were registered during the five-year span of 1982-86. A large number of religious, politico-religious, and social organizations were registered under different laws during this period.