



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

SHEHRI

July - September 1998 Vol. 8/No. 3

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Targeting for a Gun Free Society

Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment, Citizens-Police Liaison Committee and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan jointly launch a campaign for a "Gun Free Society", and ask the citizens to strengthen their hands in curing the society of this fast spreading cancer.

It pains one to say that violence has become a way of life in this country. Newspapers are filled every day with the gory and gruesome accounts of sectarian, religious, political and domestic violence, to name a few declared "reasons" for the senseless, repugnant and despicable acts of brutality. Shamed is a society where guns and arms of all make and model are more cheaply and easily available in the market than good books!

Any talk of enforcing the rule of law in a society where differences of opinion between ordinary citizens are now being routinely resolved on the point of the gun can at best be termed as idle talk. So, how can the sanity of a civil society be preserved and nurtured amidst the death rattle of a Kalashnikov!

Crime control and punishment is an issue which can have several

dimensions. Having justice and equal opportunities, freedom of thought and speech and accountability at all levels of society and state is a desirable approach to ensure that a peaceful environment prevails. However, in a country where such visions can only be found in the manifestoes and speeches of our politicians and planning documents of our civil servants - far removed from reality, the civil society demands more immediate measures to stem the tidal wave of violence, threatening to engulf us all.

A viable course of action is being outlined by three noted non-governmental organizations of the city. Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment, Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on 19th September, 1998, at Karachi Press



ROAD MAP OF A GUN FREE SOCIETY

The following resolution was passed at the Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment's Annual General Meeting held on 23-5-1998 and endorsed by the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee, (CPLC) and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). It was later presented to the general public on 19-9-1998.

1. The members of police or any other law enforcement authority which carry concealed weapons must do so only whilst in uniform and carry identification.
2. Guns must not be carried in a manner whereby the nozzle points at any person to avoid injury resulting from accidental fire. Nozzles should ideally be pointed sky wards.
3. Stringent criteria for issuance of licences be laid down and enforced without exception and not merely on the recommendation of any MPA, MNA or Senator.
4. Computerised record with



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Contributions are welcome

Interested contributors should contact the SHEHRI office for writers guidelines. SHEHRI newsletter readership is from students, professionals, environmentalists, policy makers, NGOs and other organizations.

Views expressed herein do not necessarily express the views of the Editor/Editorial Board.

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EDITORIAL

Reforming the "System"

When we talk of reforming our system, we seem to presuppose that a system of some make and kind exists. That it needs reforming implies a malfunction. What is the reality of this system we are committing ourselves to correct? Suffice is to say that the basic principle guiding this system is the oppression of the common man (more popularly known as the 98%). Living off the sweat and labour of the common man, fleecing him of his due share in the nation's wealth while keeping him ignorant about his rights in a just civil society are a few pursuits which have become the favourite pastimes of the perpetrators and protectors of the system. Where is the room for reform? May be it is not the system but the victims of the system that need to be strengthened. No better way then to provide them with the most valuable and safest asset-education. In a properly functioning democracy, the strongest checks on the working of the state are provided by an aware and educated populace. In the vital development sector - education, we are the laughing stock of the world. True reform can only come when an aware and educated common Pakistani has the last laugh.

Club, jointly launched a "Gun Free Society" campaign. A comprehensive plan of action (see box) has been prepared which calls for several administrative measures aimed at effectively lacking this menace.

Mr. Qazi Faez Isa of Shehri, Mr. Jameel Yusuf of CPLC and Mr. I. A. Rehman of H R C P spoke of the gravity of the situation and called for immediate implementation of the plan. Mr. Isa

dialogue in a peaceful manner. Mr. Isa told the audience that once while his illustrious father Qazi Isa, a famous Muslim League leader from Baluchistan was addressing a public gathering in Chaman, his supporters asked for permission to gun down Congress people for their opposition to Muslim

League. However, Mr. Isa calmed his supporters and told them that they were our political opponents and our battle against them should



The message was loud and clear

only be fought in the political arena. This is the spirit that should prevail today.

Mr. Jameel Yusuf S.ST, of CPLC said that there was massive proliferation of arms in society and ordinary citizens should actively participate in the



efforts to establish the rule of law, even if it may just involve writing letters to newspapers. Mr. I. A. Rehman of HRCP said that the country is facing a serious law and order situation with both internal and external factors adding to the worsening situation. He asked the citizens to adopt secular politics, work for rule of law and equal rights and opportunities for all.

Some victims of violence, their relatives and general participants also spoke on the occasion. Mr. Qamar-ul-Islam, whose son Mr. Shahid-ul-Islam, Director Finance PIA, was recently injured seriously in a shootout, Fariha and Fahmida, daughters of slain local journalist Manzar Imkani, Yaseen Alibhai, nephew of Basheer Alibhai, killed in the Mehfil-e-Murtaza massacre couple of years

ago and Navaid Husain of Shehri another victim of gun related violence shared their pain, sorrow and resolve with the audience and wholeheartedly supported the gun free society movement.

Mr. I. A. Rehman of HRCP said that the country is facing a serious law and order situation with both internal and external factors adding to the worsening situation.

Mehboob-ul-Hasan Rana of All Sindh Haqooq-e-Insani and Father Arnold of Idara-e-Amn-o-Insaf announced the association of their organizations with the movement.

S y m b o l i c burning of a few wooden guns also took place and stickers / hand bills bearing the message and symbol of the movement were distributed.

The programme ended with a strong resolve on the part of the participants to do all they could to make the movement a success. □

GUN FREE (CONTINUED)

complete particulars of all new licences issued should be maintained forthwith and records in respect of licences issued previously must be computerised within three months. Such records should be available with the Federation and each Province and continuously updated and exchanged between them.

5. Confiscated illegal weapons must only be utilised by law enforcement agencies or destroyed
6. No person should be issued a licence unless it has been established that such person can wield the gun in respect whereof the licence is sought.
7. Other than by the police and law enforcement authorities, carrying of prohibited weapons, in particular the Kalashnikov (AK47) be banned.
8. No person who has been convicted of any offence or against whom a criminal case is pending should be granted a licence. Similarly, no such person should have the power to recommend the issuance of a licence.
9. Government should make and implement policies for gradual withdrawal of all guns from society in a systematic and phased manner.
10. Any person who ensures the seizure of a weapon should be rewarded 25% of the market value of such seized weapon.
11. Gun manufacturers operating in the Darra area should be inducted to manufacture weapons for armed forces and sales by them to the public should be stopped.

Shehri, CPLC and HRCP urge upon the Federal and Provincial Governments to immediately implement the said resolution to make Pakistan a safer and better place. □



(L-R) Mr. Qazi Faez Isa, Mr. I. A. Rehman, Mr. Jambol Yusuf and Mr. Navaid Husain



MATTER OF MOMENT

Civil society at crossroads

As Shehri braves up for another clash with the divisive and criminal elements of society, it calls to all countrymen to make the hard choice between action and inaction vis-a-vis the struggle to establish sanity and the rule of law in society

A fundamental teaching of Islam is the propagation of goodness and protestation, against inequity and injustice in society. However, in a society where injustice is way of life and resulting rule of law is conspicuous by its absence, it is often a tortuous and hazardous route to follow. Pakistan is a case in point. Those willing to risk upsetting the apple cart (the precious status quo) are subjected to various forms of harassment, ranging from physical abuse to public ridicule. Vested interest groups belonging to various sectors of the society, through years of practice and hard work have become most efficient in the art of throttling the faint yet persistent voice of a minute section of our civil society, brave enough to stand up for their rights and liberties.

Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment are presently standing trial-their crime "Working for a Better Environment".

Through public demonstration and use of media, a group claiming to be the crusaders of Islam are accusing Shehri of protesting against the construction of two mosques in the city. The obvious inference being that Shehri is a Jewish organization (American and CIA influence an understood fact!) being patronized by non-muslim agents of hell. The classic time tested made in Pakistan conspiracy scenario, guaranteed to succeed. The only ingredient miss-

ing is the RAW element. Maybe in due course of time it will also figure in this hateful campaign. Shehri, certainly cannot deny that it is not getting the full course VIP treatment, saved for the very troublesome persistent and thick skinned of civil rights activists!

A very basic level of investigation into the accusation against Shehri

the evidence was however not hidden from the actual perpetrators of this malicious campaign. They took refuge in the one issue capable of whipping up public emotions-religion. Shehri was accused of harbouring non-muslim agents having Jewish and American connections and calls are being made to bring out a "Fatwa" for their death!



Vested interest groups belonging to various sectors of the society, through years of practice and hard work have become most efficient in the art of throttling the faint yet persistent voice of a minute section of our civil society, brave enough to stand up for their rights and liberties

proved the ridiculously apparent falsehood of the claim. A fake letter head of Shehri with forged signature of one its member was produced as a proof of the said claim. Later KBCA itself denied receiving any such letter from Shehri.

A local Urdu newspaper in which this false accusation was first carried, later on printed the denial of both Shehri and KBCA.

The ridiculous claim and the flimsy, false and fabricated nature of

However, all these attempts have met with failure as the public can distinguish between the works of an organisation actively and publically engaged in the welfare of the common men since the last ten years as against an organization which apparently does not even exist anywhere other than on the banners on the streets. To quote an article appearing in the NEWS (September 27, 1998) "seemingly no traces of the said organization exists as all efforts to get JJI's version failed to bear fruit" unquote.

This is not an isolated incident. Our civil society, today is at a crossroad. Should one let the perpetrators of crime, injustice and human rights abuses continue with their shameful activities by turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the acute misery and inequity around us or opt for the harder yet nobler choice-stand up and be counted. Shehri made its choice long ago and come what may we will do our bit towards making this country a safer, saner and better place for us and our future generation. So God help us all. □



POLICY MATTERS

A self appraisal

As the KBCA Overseer Committee nears the completion of its two year term, members of the committee highlight the positive impact they have been able to make despite adverse circumstances

By Notification No. S.O. Land (KDA)/H&TP/3-89/96 dated 23-12-1996 the Government of Sindh appointed a Committee to oversee the functioning of the Karachi Building Control Authority for a period of two years.

The then Minister for Housing and Town Planning in constituting this Committee stated:

"It has been the demand of the people of all major cities of Sindh to have organised growth, planned growth, not growth by use of discretionary powers. Every city needs to expand but according to rules. We need to preserve the character of each city. Now this is in the hands of your Committee. You have to come up to the expectations of your fellow citizens. Remember, it is easy to be disruptive, you need to be constructive in both your thoughts and ideas."

This Overseer Committee comprises of sixteen members. Other than the relevant officials, concerned professional bodies, professionals, concerned NGOs and eminent citizens are its members.

This Overseer Committee meets once a month and carries out a number of important activities.

It has proven effective in checking the brazen flouting of laws governing buildings. Buildings were earlier raised either without obtaining requisite permissions or in violation therewith. KBCA did not take action because it either colluded with illegal builders, was incom-

petent or was prevented from proceeding because of interference by important functionaries and politicians. The Overseer Committee ensured that there was no departure from the applicable laws. This resulted in a situation where bribes could not be demanded as no law was permitted to be broken. Effective measures were also taken to check the prevalent incompetence within KBCA.

Our major achievements

1. Establishment of "Public Information Counter" at KBCA to
 - a) provide information and copies of building plans/documents to the general public, and
 - b) receive complaints about illegal constructions and other KBCA related problems.
2. Establishment of transparency and openness in the working of KBCA, by making information and documents freely available to the public.
3. Standardisation of various procedures, forms and documents for use by KBCA, such as notices under sections 7-A of Sindh Building Control Ordinance 1979, properly

detailing the violations.

4. Publication in the English/Urdu/Gujrati press of regular Public Notices to assist the common man in making proper decisions. These notices dealt with:
 - a) warning the public against investment in unauthorized structures,
 - b) giving lists of under-construction unauthorized buildings in various areas, and
 - c) list of building approvals in various zones.

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5. Bringing attention of the KBCA's problems (with frivolous cases by the builders) to

the attention of the High Court. Reduction in number of interim orders being issued by Courts. Monitoring of the District Court orders on buildings by the Member Inspection Team. Establishment of procedure where DCBs and ACBs can immediately and directly assist the Courts, thus reducing frivolous litigation and misuse of court orders by illegal builders.

6. Re-enforcement of the need to obtain "Plinth Verification Certificate" so as to arrest illegal

The Overseer Committee ensured that there was no departure from the applicable laws. This resulted in a situation where bribes could not be demanded as no law was permitted to be broken

construction at the initial stage.

7. Re-enforcement of the need to regularly maintain "Field Books" by ACB's, so as to record the weekly status of construction in the various areas.
8. Resolution that no action will be taken by KBCA in violation of Regulations and in misuse of discretionary powers by politicians and bureaucrats.
9. Formulating amendments to the Sindh Building Control Ordinance 1979 to make it more effective (draft of which was sent the Government in mid 1997).
10. Co-ordination with the Heritage Committee for the preservation of old buildings in Karachi.
11. Identification of political and bureaucratic interference in

the internal working of KBCA, and support to the builders' mafia by vested political interests. Support of KBCA officers in their fight against such interference.

12. Efforts in updating of "Building and Town Planning Regulations" to bring them in line with current realities of the city.
13. Re-enforcement of the mandatory need to solicit public objections and assess the existing state of the infrastructure before conversion of land use, e.g. from residential to commercial, through ads in newspapers with wide circulation i.e. DAWN and JANG.
14. Suspension of licenses of over 40 "brief-case" architects and engineers who were heavily involved in illegal construction throughout the city. □

Members of the Overseas Committee

- Chairman of the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners
- Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council
- Chairman of the Pakistan Institute of City and Regional Planners
- Chairman of the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD)
- Chairman of the Indus Valley School of Architecture
- Ardeshir Cowasjee
- Roland de Souza of Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment
- Professor Muhammad Nauman of NED University of Engineering and Technology
- Qazi Faez Isa, Barrister-at-Law
- Professor Noman Ahmed, Coordinator Urban Design Graduate Programme, Dawood College of Engineering
- Director General Sindh Environment Protection Agency

URBAN PHOTO ALBUM



Say "Yes" to trees



"Khoka", our own version of the road side motel



One way of escaping the worries of life



One man's waste is another man's wealth



ACTIVISM

The art of complaining successfully

Citizens often say that their complaints do not evoke an appropriate response from the government departments. Maybe it is because they do not complain properly. **Khatib Ahmed** outlines, a guide map on the art of complaining successfully. Give it a try, you may be pleasantly surprised.

People generally bear a lot of inconveniences without raising their voice, or registering complaints. They should remember that making a complaint is a step forward in improving things for ourselves. Even if the matter is small, complaining successfully will give you a sense of satisfaction, of not being exploited. Also, not only is it a matter of principle to register an appropriate protest, complaining may also save others from suffering the same problems. It helps to keep the managers (employees/officials of public organisations) alert to their duties and responsibilities.

In order to extract maximum results from the process of complaining, it is necessary to proceed methodically.

Whom to direct your complaint to

In lodging, registering one's complaint, it is advisable to follow the organisational/management levels i.e. starting from the person / official directly concerned and later proceeding to higher levels of authority (in case of non-response or unsatisfactory results). In lodging your complaint, adopt the following sequence:-

- The person who is responsible for doing the job
- His immediate superior
- Head of the department
- Head of the organisation
- Elected representative of the people
- Ombudsman (federal or

provincial)

- Governor/President

How to complain and get results

Be courteous and polite.

- First write to the person who is required to do the work/or man-in-charge:-

* Identify yourself - give name, address, phone and fax contact and ask for your complaint to be officially recorded and acknowledged. It is important to obtain a receipt or proof of submitting your complaint. You can also send it by Registered AD, by post or Courier Service.

- Ask for specific relief within a reasonable period of time - specify the date by which you expect the work to be done. Emphasise the fact that he is bound by his terms of service to render efficient service.
- If within the stipulated time the work is still not done without reason, then
- Send the first reminder with a copy to his immediate superior, request him to intervene, reminding him of the rule where an officer is responsible for the behaviour of his subordinate (Rule Sl. Nos. 129 and 130, page 551, ESTA Code, The Civil Establishment Code).

If satisfactory response, intervention and relief has still not been received.

- Write to The Head of the Department enclosing copies of both the above complaints, for immediate attention. Remind him of ESTA CODE Rules. Sl. Nos. 129 and 130 (page 551)

- If still no response, file a complaint with the concerned authority (Chief Minister, Chief Secretary) under the Sindh Civil Servants Efficiency and Discipline Rules, 1973, Notification No. SOVII (S & GAD) - 1/123/73

If still satisfactory response has not been received

- Report to
 - * The Ombudsman
 - * The Governor/President

In complaining to the above sources of relief, you do not have to pay Court or lawyer's fees. You can pursue your own complaint and do not need to engage a lawyer.

Court of Law

The other path of redress available to each citizen is to file one's complaint in a court of law. In choosing this option the complainant will need to incur legal expenses (lawyer's fees, court fee, etc.) □

(Khatib Ahmed is Treasurer and Member Managing Committee, Shehri-CBE)

INTERVIEW

We need to build a relationship based on trust and understanding between government and citizens to ensure an acceptable level of development **Perveen Rehman**



*An architect by training and a social worker by choice, **Perveen Rehman** balances her teaching responsibilities at the Dawood College of Engineering and Technology, Karachi with the task of serving as Director of the famed Orangi Pilot Project with an ease and facility which indicates her total satisfaction with her chosen roles in professional life. It also speaks volumes for her commitment and drive for social change. In this exclusive interview with Shehri, she talks with **Farhan Anwar** on our urban development challenges and identifies channels for positive change.*

Q. It is being increasingly felt that the state is failing to deliver an acceptable level of basic services to the public. Should the citizens come forward and share the workload or wait for the government to devise their own solutions?

A. It should now be realized that government cannot solve all our problems. If we talk about basic services such as health, education, housing, water than already people are showing their willingness to lend a helping hand either by choice or by necessity. Sanitation and housing are two sectors where this trend is quite evident.

Q. What can be an effective mode for citizens involvement?

A. Lets take the case of sanitation, which is close to everybody's

heart. After years of action research and extension education, we at OPP have evolved a model of low cost sanitation. In this model, government and communities are partners and sanitation development takes place at two levels. Levels one is called "internal development" and level two "external development". Level one comprises of a sanitary latrine inside the house, an underground sewage line in the lane and a collector sewer at the neighborhood level. It has been demonstrated in Orangi that communities can finance, manage and maintain internal development.

External development comprises of trunk sewers and treatment plants. This level of development cannot be undertaken by the people and is the responsibility of the government. Such a model can be

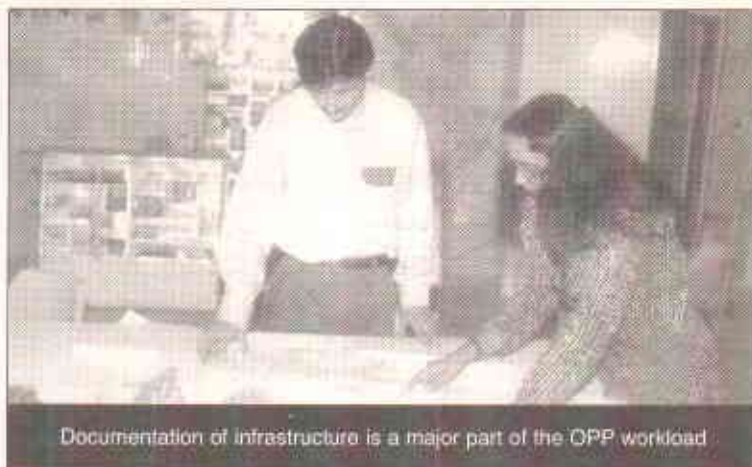
applied to other sectors of development also.

Q. You seem to be suggesting a kind of public-private partnership. However, presently the relationship is characterized by a deep sense of mistrust. How can such a model function?

A. It has to function. It is the only way out. At OPP we have had a fair measure of success in operating such a model. In neighborhood level projects, we have enabled communities to solve their civic problems mostly on their own, while on major infrastructure development projects we try to assist the government in implementing projects in a way that they address the real ground realities by taking into account the actual need of both the citizens and the system on ground. It is not



something new we are trying out. Let me tell you that while I was studying the history of the early stages of urban infrastructure development in England, I found that their planners, instead of imposing plans from above, which could have been divorced from reality, opted to allow citizen enterprise to develop and complimented citizens efforts at the higher scale of development. We need to build a relationship based on trust and understanding between government and citizens to ensure an acceptable level of development. It may not be easy, but it is the most desirable and realistic approach.



Documentation of infrastructure is a major part of the OPP workload

Q. Could you elaborate on your theme of "internal development" a little further?

A. The term basically implies infrastructure devel-

opment which can be managed totally at the neighborhood level. Citizen groups, NGO's/CBO's are ideally suited to handle this level of development. To provide technical know how for sustaining such initiatives we can build technical support institutions

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES: OPP PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) has become one of the best known NGO project in the world in the provision of sanitation. In the 16 years since its inception, the Project has directly and indirectly assisted about one million people in Orangi (Karachi) to improve sanitation. Their intervention has been developed through research into household resources and aspiration in Orangi. From the beginning, OPP staff have sought to minimise external support in order to assist households to achieve their objectives for local development in the provision of number of services including housing, health, credit for entrepreneurs, education and rural development. More recently, staff have been assisting both government and non-government agencies to initiate a number of new projects in other cities in Pakistan, drawing on the experience of the Orangi Pilot Project, whose guiding principles include:

1. The community has the resources it needs for development: skills, finance and managerial capacity. But it needs support to fully use these resources, to identify further

skills that are required and to receive training in these skills.

2. A study is not needed to identify the projects in katchi abadis. But a study is required to understand the people, their process and relationships, and to identify the solutions and methods that are appropriate.

3. The role of the NGO is to be a support organization and the technicians develop the advice. The social organizers who "extend" the advice into the settlement need to be drawn from the local community.

4. The package of useful advice is developed through interaction with all levels and groups within the community. There is a need for an attitude of mutual respect and learning.

5. The role of the activist is critical. Activists are community members who are already aware of problems, think about them and try to resolve them. The programme needs to identify these activists.

6. The smaller the level of organization, the better it will



function. In Orangi, a lane of 20 to 40 people is the level of organization.

7. The initial process is slow but after success has been demonstrated, progress readily accelerates. The concept and process should not be modified to obtain quick results.

8. The people and government are partners in development. Neither can solve all the problems of development alone. □

Source: Rahamn, Perween and Anwar Rashid (1992), "Working with communities: some principles and methods", OPP-RTI, Karachi.

such as OPP or within citizen groups, academics, professionals can give their time and expertise. However, institution building is the preferred approach to sustain long term success. There is need to develop a partnership between people and professionals also.

Q. You say that professional and academics can lend technical support to such ventures. Do you feel that professional and academic institutions are playing their due role in the urban development process?

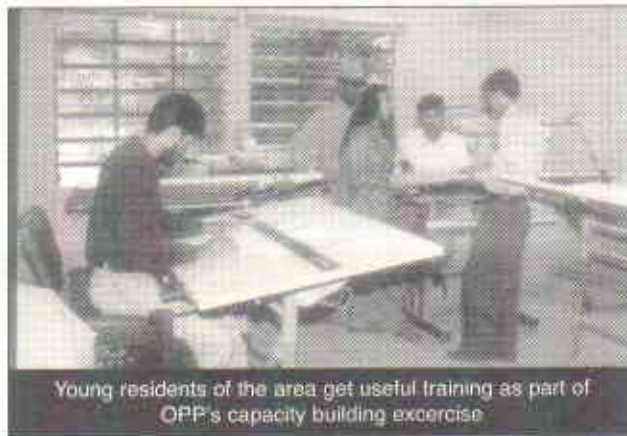
A. It is unfortunate that our academics and professional are not coming up with effective solutions for tackling our urban crisis. One reason could be that they do not fully comprehend the evolving dynamics of our urban development process. The thought processes of our architects and engineers are not geared to the needs of the city. The practical, common sense approach is missing. They need to overcome their stagnancy and broaden their horizons for they have an important role to play in the future development of this city and the country. But an ostrich like attitude will lead us nowhere.

Q. How would you assess the role of the NGO sector in this equation?

A. Our experience with NGO's has been disappointing as compared to community based groups and organizations. We need to build institutions which can be achieved if one concentrates on capacity building among individuals over a period of time. That approach is missing in NGO's.

Q. What can other NGO's learn from the OPP experience?

A. OPP is an organization which has evolved over a period of time. It is our belief that this attitude that somebody else will do our work can lead us nowhere. That is why we focus on capacity building among individuals. Boys who used to spend idle hours on the streets yesterday are today documenting the land use profile of Orangi with us! We have no prejudices against any section of society. It is important that a forum for dialogue is established so that



Young residents of the area get useful training as part of OPP's capacity building exercise

free flow of ideas takes places.

OPP is working to develop alternative models of development in which the maximum input comes from local enterprise. More emphasis is now being placed on supporting residents to increase their bargaining power and skills within the local political context. We have decentralized our own functions in five separate areas namely sanitation, health, education, housing and micro-credit.

Q. Your micro-credit scheme has done a lot to empower people to take control of their own lives. How can we use this tool of poverty alleviation more effectively with a broader network of operation?

A. Banks can do a lot to spread this system. However, our banks are not structured to deal in micro-credits. They may loan 1 lac rupees to one person, but will find it difficult to distribute the same amount among ten persons.

Q. Privatization is being offered as a panacea to our problems. Your comments.

A. Privatization can only succeed if the ground realities are taken into account. Since our infrastructure is not properly documented, not many people know that already much of the system is being managed by citizens and the organized private sector. It is 'already privatized! Whether it be transport, garbage management or water and sewerage the informal sector is making a major contribution. We have to acknowledge their role and properly document our system. Otherwise, no privatization plan or major development initiative can succeed. Baldia is a classic example. We at OPP are painstakingly documenting various sectors of our infrastructure development. The results may surprise many.

Q. Is it not time we had a functioning "Master Plan" for Karachi?

A. There can be no two opinions about the urgent need of preparing a Master Plan for Karachi, which also functions. However, as I have said before a Master Plan can only work if it responds to the ground realities. We first need to document the existing situation and acknowledge the role being played by the various sectors of society. □



NGO PROFILE

Book Group: Educating the child

Saleka Enver of Shehri, profiles the work and achievements of an organization striving for positive change in the field of child education

It was like being transported into another world - the world of childhood, a world full of books, colours, pictures, a world of fantasy and truth. This is how I felt talking to Ms. Rumana Husain, the Director of the Book Group.

She, along with Mr. Sami Mustafa, the Principal of the Centre of Advanced Studies (CAS) School formed the Book Group with Mr. Mustafa as its Chairperson in 1988.

The Book Group started with 2 dedicated people, both belonging to the CAS, a private school in Karachi, with the aim of producing quality books in Urdu for children. They both felt that attending seminars and condemning the then available books in Urdu as pathetic and inadequate, was not their cup of tea. They both decided to produce what they thought constituted a quality book. Hence, Sami Mustafa wrote the story of "*Hassan ki Gali*" and Rumana Husain illustrated it. This was in 1988 - since then there has been no looking back. "*Hassan ki Gali*" is now in its fifth edition, and there are over 69,000 copies of the book in use in schools!

The BG, represents a success story in Pakistan, a great effort in the field of quality Urdu literature for children.

When asked how the BG books were different from others available in the market, Rumana said that the most significant aspect

about these books is that their content is a major departure from the routine way in which the subject was being handled. The text is about simple everyday life, and about interesting issues and objects that children experience. Presented with beautiful illustrations to which the child responds very favorably.

Unfortunately, our present text books, have rote-learning built-in them. It limits the child's creativity, and BG has striven to change this methodology.

Most BG books are accompanied by a teachers guide which spells out guidelines for teachers, "session by session, and include conceptual and vocabulary development, articulation of thought and confidence building", says Rumana.

I spoke to a teacher from the Froebel Education centre, Karachi, Mrs. Mehar Khan, who teaches Prep-I and Prep-II. Her feedback is very positive. She says that whenever she reads a story written by the BG, class participation increases



The Book Group team; committed to the goal of professional excellence

to hundred percent. The child's interest is aroused, their thinking level improves and their response matches the contents of the book. The teacher's guides further help in improving the performance of the teacher.

Talking about the type of research that goes in the preparation of their books, it was enlightening to

hear that the authenticity of each and every word of the book is checked and measured by the members of the BG. Sometimes there are arguments, but almost always there is a consensus. For instance, one of the upcoming book "*Pakistan ki Sair*", which will take children on a whirlwind ride covering the whole country, was held back due to last

minute changes in both text and layout. I was shown a beautiful looking book, but Rumana pointed out a sentence which said "*Sindhi aur Balochi aurtein...*". Now, "*Balochi*" is the word used

"Unfortunately, our present text books, have rote-learning built-in them. It limits the child's creativity, and BG has striven to change this methodology"
Rumana Husain



for the language of the Baloch people, it cannot be used to describe its women. Hence, the book was sent back for reprinting! Such perfection is commendable.

The BG is also venturing to write about rural villages. For this, members of the BG visited Sachadino Goth, spoke to the residents, took photographs etc., so that they should obtain first hand knowledge on a Sindhi village. Likewise, they want to do a story on Thar as well. They are also planning to do a series on the major cities of Pakistan.

The Book Group has also adopted a girls school with the purpose of demonstrating improvements in

show that improvements can be made in the present system with the same staff, The real issue is not inefficiency but good governance and accountability", Says a confident Rumana

According to the Book Group's Quarterly Report (January to March 1988), the results of the assessment were satisfactory. The students have shown signs of improvement, their confidence and interest in learning can be seen from the work they have produced.

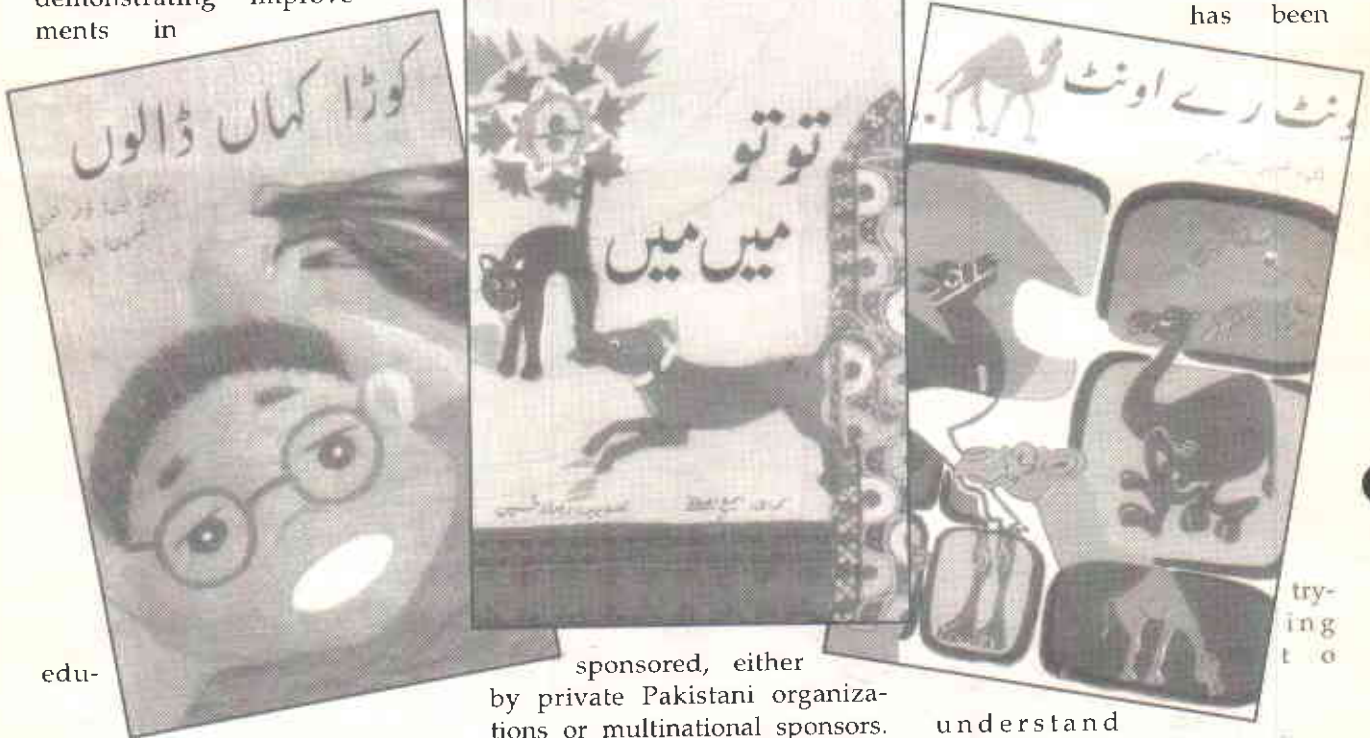
How do Book Group finance their books? Almost all the books are

organizations and individuals is a source of encouragement to Book Group, which it greatly appreciates.

"PARAMOUNT BOOKS" is the sole distributor for the BG books. Most books are priced at Rs. 20, but for schools operating in low income communities the prices are subsidised according to each schools financial ability to pay for the books.

What are their future plans? The BG will continue in their endeavour to write quality books for children.

Starting as a pilot project in October 1988, the Book Group has been



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cation. "Three years ago we adopted the Junior Model Government Girls Primary School, Frere Town. Under the notification of the Sindh Government, it is a temporary transfer of the school, which has 650 girls students. We have employed only a part-time co-ordinator, and we want to assess if there is room for positive changes. We want to

sponsored, either

by private Pakistani organizations or multinational sponsors. Some of the sponsors are Engro Chemical Ltd., Fuji Film, Pak Ltd., Hub Leather Products, The German Speaking Women's Club, Ihsan & Sons (Pvt.) Ltd., Badin Concession Joint Venture, ABN-Amro Bank, New Zealand High Commission, CIDA, General Tyre and Rubbers, UNDP, Australian High Commission, etc. The continued support and help from

understand and address some of the issues of curriculum development and teachers training. During this time work has expanded and diversified considerably, and the alternative textbooks produced have been accepted by a large number of schools.

The BG has decided to upscale its work into a centre for Education-