

Social Welfare Policies in Pakistan

Social welfare activities and services were initiated from both private and public sector immediate after creation of Pakistan. Voluntary, charity and religious organizations were rendering welfare services in many fields. On the other hand, government of Pakistan requested the United Nations for assistance to start social welfare services. Training programmes for social workers, community development projects, medical social services projects, Village Aid programme and social work education were started during early 1950s. Social Welfare field became part of five year plans and many welfare institutes and services were emphasized in five year plans.

Social welfare policies also play vital role to give course of action in right direction for addressing social problems and needs in various fields. These fields could be education, health, women development, child welfare, youth welfare, community development, old age welfare and other social development areas. In early 1950s, United Nations experts and government officials realized the need of well-defined and clear social policy to guide social welfare programmes.

Unfortunately, story of social welfare policies in Pakistan is not satisfactory and effective. Since 1947, following four social welfare policies have been designed during different periods.

First Social Welfare Policy 1955

Ideology of Pakistan is based on Islamic values and teachings and Islam covers welfare of individuals and communities. It is not only a charity-oriented religion but also teaches good governance for welfare of women, children, destitute and family etc. It emphasizes on self-help, social justice and good human relationships. A beautiful system of public assistance in form of Zakat, Usher

and Bait-ul-Maal prevails in Islamic socioeconomic system. Though, the UN experts and policy makers recognized Islamic values and its importance in policy making, policy document was not carrying these values and principles as an important base.

Many social problems were identified before formation of First Social Welfare Policy which include poverty, education related problems, health issues, housing problems, maladjustment of individuals and groups in changing life patterns, services' lacking for recreation facilities and many others. It was not possible to deal with all these problems through a single social welfare policy. There was need to design separate policies on every thematic area. So, Social Welfare Policy 1955 did not directly work on these subjects but these were included as distant goals to improve quality of life.

Elements of Social Welfare Policy

Many experts, departments and social workers discussed and identified following elements to be major focus of the policy:

- 1.** It was necessary to make local people realise about their problems and solution on the basis of self-help. Community development programmes in both urban and rural areas were given priority to involve local people in problem solution. Initially, community development projects and Village Aid Programme were considered important.
- 2.** It was planned and emphasized to encourage initiation, growth and assistance of voluntary welfare agencies. Government alone was not in position to solve all social problems at grassroots level. Private organizations formed at local level could assist government and communities for problem solution. It was suggested that government would give technical support for establishment and financial aid for organizations.

3. The policy also included stimulation of social welfare programmes at provincial and local level through decentralization so that local people could get maximum benefits. As the both provinces at that time (East Pakistan and West Pakistan) did have different socioeconomic conditions and nature of problems, it was good to design different programmes most suitable to address problems. Local level responsibilities participation was also necessary for self-help programmes and better services.

4. A big number of refugees were living on roadsides and open areas. It was another challenge for government. The policy included housing programme especially for refugees which was linked with social welfare sector at that time for better and soon adjustment of refugees.

5. Labour protection programme was linked with social welfare because a large number of labour classes from refugees and other urban areas needed government attention. It was emphasized to provide education, health and housing services through that programme.

According to Sheerin Rehmat Ullah, the first policy was not fully implemented and remained a written document in files. Imposition of Martial Law in 1958, the policy lost its importance and bureaucracy started to design programmes. There was no social welfare policy during 1960s, 1970s and even till 1988 in Pakistan. Different social welfare programmes (community development projects, medical social services projects) continued without any policy guidelines and Village Aid Programme was converted and given under Basic Democracies introduced by Ayub Khan.

Second Social Welfare Policy 1988

After a long time, in June 1988, the federal government initiated discussion among government officials, social workers and thinkers from all four

provinces for designing and adoption of social welfare policy. It was realized that poverty was still a big problem effecting quality of life. A social policy was needed to protect and uplift of needy, disable and disadvantaged groups.

Through some programmes guided by policy, deserving individuals and welfare organizations could be aware and assisted financially. The second social welfare policy focussed on children, youth, women and old age people. It also addressed social problems like drug addiction, mental health and beggary. Besides that, the policy recommended to bring changes in administration system of government social welfare for better working.

This policy was based on concept of Islamic welfare state and contemporary concept of development. Financial assistance for individuals and welfare agencies was suggested through Zakat. Mobile Units worked for social awareness and social development was carried on through community development projects. Commission on Child Welfare and Development were established at provincial level. A separate Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education was to be established with two social welfare and special education divisions. Social Work education and training of social workers were also focussed and suggested to introduce Social Work Subject at college level. Research and monitoring was also emphasized. According to Sheerin

Rehmat Ullah (2002), second policy was a comprehensive document covering social welfare aspects. She mentioned that Zakat administration and social welfare could not be combined as policy recommended.

Third Social Welfare Policy 1992

Second social welfare policy was formulated after 33 years of the first policy while the third social welfare policy was designed after four years of the Second Social Welfare Policy 1988. On 12, 13, and 22 October 1992, the Federal

Planning Commission conducted meetings to discuss new policy guidelines for Eighth Five Year Plan. In previous policies and plans Islamic values and institutions (Zakat, Usher and Bait-ul- Maal) were linked with welfare of needy and underprivileged groups. After realization of problems in result of industrialization and urbanization, a new and innovative approach (maximum use of Islamic instruments) was necessary for both government and welfare organizations.

Following objectives were set for new policy:

- 1.** Community participation in social welfare programmes and mobilization of resources to meet needs
- 2.** Collaborative and joint efforts of government and private welfare organizations to design and implement welfare programmes and projects for physically, socially and economically handicapped.
- 3.** Extension of social welfare programmes in rural areas
- 4.** To hand over social welfare responsibilities and programmes to local government organizations and to help them for these programmes
- 5.** To design special development projects for renewal of First Five Year Plan for making their functioning better and to extend their services.
- 6.** Arrangements to monitor and evaluate financial and other assistance given to NGOs at federal and provincial level.
- 7.** Formations of a coordinating body to look the financial assistance of NGOs from government and international agencies.
- 8.** Remedial programmes for care, welfare and rehabilitation of disabled.
- 9.** Provisions and facilities for staff welfare to enhance their working and effectiveness for service delivery

10. Decentralization of planning and implementation of welfare programmes at district level. Federal and provincial governments would supervise, monitor, train, evaluate, coordinate, legislate and conduct research on working and welfare programmes.

The third policy emphasised to supervise and control the matters of voluntary social welfare agencies special their financial assistance by international agencies. In this regard, policy suggested to update NGOs' funding related legislation.

This policy also recommended to form women's welfare division, youth welfare division, population division and Zakat administration under one Ministry of Social Welfare and Humanitarian Affairs. Another main focus of this policy was decentralization of social welfare at district and local level. Ministry of Social Welfare and Humanitarian could not be formed.

Fourth Social Welfare Policy 1994

Ministry of Health, Special Education and Social Welfare designed another policy document in 1994.

Main objectives of proposed policy were:

- 1.** Social development based on strength of tradition, social and cultural humanism of people.
- 2.** Designing of activities to motivate and mobilise people about their social responsibility for voluntary contribution in social welfare.
- 3.** Promotion, expansion and strengthening of welfare programmes of NGOs.
- 4.** Promotion, expansion and strengthening of public sector welfare programmes.

- 5.** Designing and provision of welfare services for communities in general and for oppressed, needy and disabled in particular.
- 6.** Social welfare measures for minorities
- 7.** Welfare facilities for communities in urban slums, rural areas and other backward areas.
- 8.** Measures for elimination of nepotism and ‘Sifarish’ culture.
- 9.** Provision of suitable environment to integrate underprivileged and disables in mainstream.
- 10.** Elimination of all kinds of discrimination
- 11.** Protection of communities from national and foreign exploitation.

According to Sheerin Rehmat Ullah, there was need of mass awareness through media and important role of thousands NGOs. The policy pointed out target groups i.e., children, youth, women, old people, minorities, disables, beggars, prisoners, drug addicts, patients, students and residents of slum areas and kachi abadies. Many services were suggested i.e., orphanages and child care centres, services for care of school dropouts, kidnapped, labourers etc. Other measures included shelter for women, financial assistance from Zakat funds, vocational training centres for

poor communities, legal aid services, working women hostel etc. Poor patients would be assisted financially and socially through medical social workers in government hospitals. School social work was suggested to develop linkage among students, teachers and parents. Community development services were suggested to continue for community mobilization and self-help programmes. This policy tried to enlarged the social welfare programme.