

People's Works Programme: An Analytical Study of Political Response & Constitutional Reality

Abstract

Rural development has a long history in Pakistan as that there development had to begin since the early years. At the eve of independence, Pakistan had been a predominantly rural country; the most part of the population lived in the rural areas and the rural population still account for two third of the total population of Pakistan. Thus, rural development has always been remained a national priority and permanent agenda throughout the history of Pakistan. All governments had introduced developmental programs and made deliberate attempts to stimulate modern changes in rural economy and social infrastructure. People's Works Programme was a vigorous effort of this series, primarily introduced by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and later reintroduced in the governments of Peoples Party in 1988, 1993, and 2008. This article mainly addresses this programme initiated in the first period of Benazir Bhutto, 1988-1990 and quest of the study is related to probing into political response and constitutional reality. The current study looks into the structural and administrative features of the program then largely evaluates the political response given to it and also explores the constitutional truth in analytical way. Priority has been given to the primary documents and secondary sources.

Key Words: Pakistan, Rural Development, Peoples' Works Programme, Political Response, Constitutional Reality.

Introduction

The history of rural development programmes in Pakistan can be dated back to 1953 as the first such programme was launched by the name of Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (VAID).¹ After that, there was a series of developmental programmes which were initiated from time to time by different appellations e.g. the Rural Works Programme (RWP),² Peoples' Works Programme (PWP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP),³ Five Points Programme (FPP),⁴ Peoples' Works Programme (PWP), Tameer-e -Watan Programme (TWP), Social Action Programme (SAP), Khushkhal Pakistan Programme (KPP)⁵ and in the last of this series was Ehsaas Programme (EP). These programmes were initiated with the affirm intent of reducing the poverty, especially in rural areas. Peoples' Works Programme is one of the above mentioned programmes. Scholars paid attention on Peoples Works Programme but examined only under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Period, for instance, Naveed Hamid⁶ and Khushi Mohammad Khan⁷ are the most imperative. The Peoples Works Programme, 1988-1990 has been briefly evaluated in the earlier studies and

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referred merely in the background history of development.⁸ In this attempt, instead, we aim to map out the People's Works Programme exclusively in political and constitutional perspectives by arguing, effectiveness of this programme reduced by political factor instead of statutory. The study starts from the historical background then focuses on the era 1988-1990 by elaborating program's initiation and its structural features. Mainly emphasized to study the response given to the Peoples' Work Programme in political arena during 1988-1990 and explored the constitutional legitimacy. Conclusion and suggestions has been integrated in the last section.

Historical Background

The Peoples' Works Programme was primarily initiated by the people's party government under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1972. The underlying objective of the programme was to mobilise the local initiatives and leadership, identify projects and prioritize them by mutual consensus within the community so as to achieve full participation of the community. For instance, to combat unemployment and underemployment, to satisfy the basic needs of the peoples, to mobilise local resources, to provide constructive leadership, to generate confidence and self-reliance in the masses were the key issues which were under consideration at the time of inception of this programme. About 30 different projects were recommended under the programme including road construction, school buildings, small irrigation damed, industrial homes for women, brick making, fish culture, sheep breeding, drinking water facilities, adult education, tree plantation, and cottage industries. Along the lines of the values of the Peoples Works Programme (PWP), representative institutions were created in all the provinces, with slight difference in composition, provincial boards were established by the provinces. These boards were consisting of minister and secretaries of nation-building department. At the district level, district works councils were created comprising MNAs and district officials of nation-building department.⁹ During the period 1972 to 1977 an amount of PR. 1046.08 million was allocated for the programme and the amount 979.88 million was utilized.¹⁰ This programme was implemented by the provincial governments¹¹ and no resistance was observed from the Centre. The governor of Punjab Malik Meraj Khalid initiated the programme in December 1972.¹² Subsequently, the programme was initiated by governments of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in 1988,¹³ 1994,¹⁴ and 2008.¹⁵

People's Works Programme (PWP), 1988

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government which had taken over after general election in 1988 under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, expressed a strong resolved to improve the social infrastructure in rural areas. Thus, it was announced to revive a previous programme named Peoples Works Programme on December 4, 1988, designed to respond to the felt needs of the public and to mobilise local efforts. Prime Minster Benazir Bhutto launched the programme at Darmangi village in the outskirts of Peshawar (KP) on 23rd April 1989 by inauguration sinking of a tube-well.¹⁶ An amount of 2 billion Rs. allocated for this programme

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for the remaining seven months of the fiscal year 1988-1989¹⁷ and in the fiscal year 1989-1990 another installment of Rs. 3 billion was provided.¹⁸ It was expected that new programme would enhance the development and supplemented the existing development activities through a set of schemes which had optimum impact on the poorest segment of rural population, such as supply of drinking water, education, health, sanitation, rural roads and implementing the Prime Ministers' pledge to decentralize government functions. The main objectives of the programme were as;

- i. To improve and upgrade the social infrastructure;
- ii. To mobilise the local resources and to motivate the people for productive effort;
- iii. To undertake such productive projects that will build up the economy through the provisions of basic amenities;
- iv. To uplift the under-privileged section of the population such as women, disabled and aged;
- v. To improve employment opportunities for unemployed and under employed.

Approach and Implementation Mechanism

The programme implemented and administrated by federal government so it was federal in approach and mechanism. Programme was headed by Ministry of Planning and Rural Development. Federal Implementation Committee (FIC) was created in the Ministry of Planning and Rural Development for supervising the implementation of People's Works Programme. District Committees were established in each district headed by a federally appointed administer for the Peoples' Works Programme consisting of elected representatives or public-spirited men known for integrity and public services after their approval from the federal government. District heads of the nation-building or ex-officio members of the committee were appointed. The nomination of the other members of the committee was considered as appropriate. The district committee identified the schemes worth Rs. 0.5 million and sent for sanction of the Federal Implementation Committee.¹⁹ Thus, the programme was federal in concept and frame work.

Political Response to PWP

During the period 1988-1990, none of the political party had strength to form rule at both levels. PPP, a party, had the power in center under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto but could not form the government in two provinces i.e., Punjab and Balochistan. The party position in Centre and provinces is shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Party wise Centre-provinces governments, 1988-1990

Center	Punjab	Sindh	KP	Balochistan
PPP-MQM-ANP	IJI	PPP-MQM	PPP-ANP	BNA-IJI-JUI

Source: explored by the author personally

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During, 1988-1990, the center had the task to cope with the tensions arising from the thrust of center-provinces conflicts and contradictions. There were several issues of conflicts. The detailed study of these conflicts is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the issue related to the implementation of People's Works Programme has been analyzed in the current study. The center faced serious trouble in political arena for the implementation of the People's Works Programme. The People's Work Programme was mostly resented and restricted especially by those provinces where the opposition parties were ruling i.e. the Punjab and the Balochistan. Nawaz Sharif and Akbar Bugti were the chief ministers in Punjab and Balochistan respectively. Both were staunch opponent of the government of Benazir which created center-provinces conflicts. The provincial governments of both provinces were not co-operating with the central government for the implementation of the programme due to political clashes. They resisted the implementation of People's Work Programme on the grounds that it was federal in approach and hence attacking the autonomy of the provincial governments.²⁰ They also protested the use of program's funds by PPP's workers.²¹ Provincial governments criticized it as a plan to destabilize the non-PPP provincial governments. In these provinces, this programme was conceived as the interference of the Centre in the provincial matters because they held that the People's Work Programme is purely a provincial subject. Moreover, provinces declared it as the encroachment of the provincial autonomy and the violation of the constitution.²²

Chief Minister of the Punjab, Mian Nawaz Sharif, was bent upon to oppose any move that is coming from the Centre. He did his best to stop the implementation of People's Work Program in Punjab. He stated during his address to the PCS officers, we would do utmost to oppose the People's Work Programme.²³ The war of charges and counter charges started between center and Punjab. Punjab government submitted contradictions as; PWP was started without taking into confidence to the provinces, all members of district committees were from the PPP, the provincial development funds were misused by the center. Later, they criticized the PWP as source of bribery and creation of parallel administration in Punjab. Punjab government created utmost difficulties for the implementation of PWP in Punjab.²⁴ This conflict created critical scenes in villages. The administrators of Peoples Work Programme sent the teams for building village roads and drains with bricks, and the local deputy commissioners were sending bulldozers to destruct the structure and "arresting the workmen on charges of disturbing the public peace."²⁵

By the same token, Nawab Akbar Bugti, the Chief Minister of Balochistan also upheld the People's Work Programme as interference in provincial autonomy and sovereignty.²⁶ As Samina Ahmed stated, "Balochistan strongly criticized the Centre's interference in Balochistan provincial matters."²⁷ Lamb also stated the issue as, "Bugti also declared his own war against Centre and refused to let the Peoples Works Programme to operate, ordering gleefully his bureaucrats to seize the Federal Government Land-Rovers."²⁸ No attempt was made by any side to remove the dissents between Centre and the provinces Punjab and Balochistan on People's Works Programme.²⁹ There was an apprehension that

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the existing confrontation between center and the two provinces could cause a set back to the execution of the programme with undesirable consequences.

On the other side, People's Works Programme was easily implemented in Sindh and KP provinces, where the central party i.e., PPP was ruling. The governments of these two provinces did not oppose the implementation of People's Works Programme but in the national assembly, opposition members from the provinces Sindh and KP criticized the PWP. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a member for National Assembly from Sindh province, criticized the policies of central government of PPP and also submitted protest against PWP in these words;

[C]ome the question of People s Works programme. That is interference in the affairs of the Provinces. They were committed to give more autonomy to the Provinces. Their Manifesto will bear me out that they had made a firm commitment to the people of Pakistan in the election campaign that the People's party will enhance the quantum of provincial autonomy. Leave aside the increasing of quantum of Provincial autonomy by bringing in an amendment in the House to fulfill their commitments, they encroached on the already existing autonomy of the provinces.³⁰

Similarly, the provincial government of KP also welcomed the PWP and it has been mentioned earlier the base of this programme laid down in KP as its inauguration ceremony held in KP on April 23, 1989.³¹ But PWP was criticized by the opposition members of the national assembly belonged from KP.³² PPP-ANP alliance was collided as Mahendra Prasad Singh and Veena Kukreja stated, "The People's Work Programme coming into practice without taking the provinces into confidence caused break up of PPP-ANP coalition in KP."³³

Debate in National Assembly for Legislative Right on PWP

This issue of PWP aroused between Centre and provinces over legislative rights. Earlier it has been mentioned this programme was announced by the Central government of the PPP for the rural development under the Federal Ministry for Local Government and Rural Development in December, 1988. This programme was started for providing the basic services to the poor at the gross root level, such as schools, health, drinking water, brick lined village streets and sanitation.³⁴ The federal government attempted to run this programme as a federal government's project.³⁵ The cause of conflict was not the initiation of this Programme, but, its induction through central government got bitter resistance. It was a programme of undertakings concern to social development which normally falls within the purview of the provincial government in previous governments. For instance, the Rural Development Programme of Ayub Khan, People's Works Programme of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, 1972 and Five Point Programme of Muhammad Khan Junejo implemented through provincial and local governments. All members from the opposition parties criticized the People's Work Program's induction by Centre in their speeches during the discussion on presidential address in joint sitting of parliament. For instance, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi member of the National Assembly stated as, "It was started during the former Peoples' Party Government and... there in that Government... that the funds for the People's Works Programme were given to the Provinces and the amount was disbursed through the recommendations of the elected representatives. Now, here what has happened is that the entire programme has been usurped by the Federal Government."³⁶

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Major (Retd) Aftab Ahmad Khan, another member of National Assembly, stated as, "People's Programme is a good programme, no doubt, but if it is channelized through the elected representatives and the Provinces."³⁷ Ch. Mohammad Ashraf stated, we are not against the People's Works Programme, we are against the procedure of implementation, and the correct procedure of implementation is that, this programme should be implemented through the provincial governments.³⁸ Ch. Amir Husain, a member of national assembly who belonged from IJI stated that the People's Works Programme is a provincial subject and should be implemented according to the constitution by the provinces as well as with the consent of the provinces. He further stressed on the need of the consensus between Centre and provinces for the development.

However, the prestige was not given to constitutional provisions both sides were interpreting the articles of the constitution for their own interest.³⁹ War of words revealed by the statements of MNA's, e.g., Syed Fakhar Imam, a member of National Assembly for PML stated as, "the constitutional functions of the Provinces were frustrated in violation of Article 97 by having the People's Work Programme, a Programme which is really, in essence, of local Government, building small roads, having small things but because they did not have their Governments at the Provinces they were even willing to violate the letter and the spirit of the Constitution."⁴⁰ Qadir Bukhash Maila, a member of the national assembly, belonged to PPP, stated, if constitution has to be violated for the development of the social structure then "ain majrooh hota ha to honay do (let the constitution to be violated)."⁴¹ Thus, such kind of political response made vulnerable the credibility of the programme.

Constitutional Reality

The allocation of legislative powers between Centre and provinces has been decided in the fourth schedule of constitution 1973 under federal and concurrent lists and its part-V; chapter-1 preserved the domains of both centers of power. The Article 142(b) allocated power to the Centre and provinces for legislation on the subjects listed in the concurrent list. The matter of social welfare is listed in the concurrent list in entry number 25. Constitutionally, both Centre and provinces were authorized to make legislation on the subjects enlisted under the concurrent list. The Centre launched People's Works Programme with the purpose to improve the local governments and rural areas. Actually, this was a programme of social welfare and social welfare was enlisted in the concurrent list. Regarding this, the central government also had the authority to run this programme while two provinces claimed that it's a provincial subject and should be run by the provincial governments and local bodies. On the other hand, the centre argued that, "constitution empowers the Federal Government to take any measures for the social and economic uplift of the people."⁴² Both sides insisted that the people's work programme was their subject. This conflict would probably have not appeared, if, in case of conflict the constitutional authority of the center would be accepted. Since, it was the programme of social development and the subject of social welfare was enlisted in the concurrent list. The Centre and the provinces both had the right of legislation under the Article 142 for the subjects enlisted in concurrent list, and in case of clash, priority was to be given to the Centre under

the Article 143. To accept the constitutional authority of the Centre was obligatory to the provinces but they denied doing so which caused conflict. The constitution also expanded the opportunity of settlement in case of any dispute between Centre and provincial governments by authorizing the Supreme Court for jurisdiction under the Article 184 but that opportunity was not utilized to settle the stated issue. Besides, the concurrent list was not dissolved in prescribed tenure of ten years. Since, constitution makers decided that the concurrent list must be abolished after ten years⁴³ which was mandatory to abolish by 1984 but this was the time when military was in government who suspended the constitution of 1973. The Junejo government was established in 1985. It restored the constitution of 1973 with the addition of eighth amendment but did not abolish the concurrent list. Even, after the establishment of democratic government of PPP in 1988, and in the later years this constitutional responsibility was ignored. This ignorance also gave a space to the conflict on People's Works Programme.

Conclusion

The above detailed discussion indicated that the central government attempted to develop the rural areas by initiating People's Works Programme during 1988. The main aim of the programme was poverty alleviation and to improve the rural infrastructure but the political factor made the objective of the programme difficult to attain. The central government of PPP faced staunch opponent governments in two provinces those halted the implementation of People's Works Programme in provinces under their control. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had personal enmity, they had prejudices towards each other, they determined flopping the policies of each other and apathetic to respect the constitution. The aftermath of this conflict occurred as the obvious deficit in the development of the countryside. To conclude we can say that the politics of conflicts, between PPP and PML reduced the effectiveness and credibility of People's Works Programme. In Pakistan's history, no single party could form government in all four provinces till now. Thus, there is a need of mending the political prejudices for gaining beneficial effects of those development programmes that were being commenced for improving rural or urban infrastructure. This is also necessary to eliminate the political biases for preserving utilized investments and energies in the programmes of rural and urban development.

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