

Book Review

Title of the Book:	Transforming Urban Settlements, The Orangi Pilot Project's Low-Cost Sanitation Model.
Subject:	Research
Author:	S. Akbar Zaidi,
Publisher:	City Press, Saddar, Karachi, 2000
ISBN	969-8380-35-3
Page:	128.
Price:	Pak Rs. 225/-

The book presented herein unfolds the vicissitudes of urban settlements with reference to Karachi city. This book provides a different perspective and describes the formulation and execution of the Orangi Pilot Project's Sanitation Model. It is neatly designed and well produced by the author. No heuristic study so far appears to have been conducted in this area. The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) is famous internationally and locally for its low cost sanitation programme which initiated in the lanes and vicinity of Orangi Town, the largest informal settlement in Karachi housing more than a million people, nearly three decades ago. The book is an edited and a bridged version of a study conducted by the author submitted to Water Aid, UK, one of the United Kingdom's leading charity organization.

The book argues that the main reasons for the remarkable success of the OPP and its low-cost sanitation programme are; the nature of this model, philosophy and methodology of this one of the best-known non-governmental organization. Followed by a critical evaluation of the NGO sector in Pakistan, the author furnish the justification about why NGO sector has not been able to replicate the model. The book also dispels certain numerous myths and negative conceptions about the Project, disseminated by some NGOs and donors. In nutshell, the brunt of the author's analysis of the NGO sector is, to put it concisely, that NGOs could only play an efficient role if they were to 'overcome some of their main weaknesses arising out of their dependence on donors and their organizational culture' which is not fitted with the local people's life-style.

Drawn upon original data, this is an in-depth study which portrays the sanitation condition of the deprived urban community and OPP performance with the help of community for bringing the change in the life-style of the community. The book is divided in eight chapters opening from informative introduction of the problem and moving on to the impact and success of OPP in Orangi. The author presented the justification of OPP success.

The chapter 2 of the book is mainly focuses on the field observations done by the author to the area and the group discussions with key focal persons of the

community followed by socio-economic impact; the author tries to address the questions pertains to how OPP has changed the lives of the people? And how to construct better quality sewerage line in the community? The author narrates the life-style of people living in urban slum area of Orangi and tells the worked performed by Dr. Akhater Hameed Khan and his team in terms of social consciousness, mobilization and social change in the life of the people. The writer also discussed the socio-politically unstable situation in Orangi in 1985-86 and briefly pointed out the role of OPP in rebuilding the houses of the community.

The chapter 3 covers the facts of OPP booming success in Orangi in providing the provision of low-cost sanitation. The writer supports his work by mentioning the observation of John Abbott and JP Lumbers on page number 32 in the said book. In this chapter, the author also describes in details the “OPP Model” and its salient features, philosophy and Methodology of the organization. Besides this, the author also mentioned the OPP’s way of process of community mobilization for sewerage programme and other developmental interventions and approaches in the community done by OPP which was recognized by UNCHS. The author elaborated the work in a simple and easy mode although; at times somewhat repetitiveness is seen in this chapter which could have spun better.

While talking about the advantages of Orangi and Karachi, author argues the Orangi’s topography. He says:

“There is no requirement for providing external development in a terrain like Orangi’s local government and its institutions can be ignored, at least for a time by when the low cost sanitation model begins to function .In other cities and in areas where the terrain is flat, there is no escaping the requirement for secondary and trunk sewerage facilities, and hence no escaping institutions of government.” *(Excerpt from the book)*

Apart from the OPP’s model, the author also discusses the replicability of the model and analyzed other organizations projects at national level. In his brief chapter 6, the author acknowledged the work done by Dr. Akhtar Hameed khan, the well-known figure and the pioneer of the OPP .The author admired the distinguished role and working style of Dr. Khan, which was entirely differently from other NGOs working in Pakistan.

Moving to the next chapter, the author scrutinized the nature of criticism that had been made of the OPP approach and attempts to respond it with great responsibility. He elaborated the key arguments and analyzed the validity of criticisms; he made a rational evaluation in this very interesting chapter.

In the concluding chapter, the author again review the uniqueness of OPP model and summarized its philosophy and identified the key factors .He justified the reasons why OPP disallows cash subsidies and also the replicable and valuable of the Model in Pakistani context. He also pointed out some weaknesses and shortcomings in the model and recommended few suggestions for improvement.

No doubt, it is a fact that the author is very renowned and fairly experienced writer, this collection is being the fifth of his major works. Nevertheless, the book is memorable, concise and valuable, as an evidenced it provides comprehensive information about urban marginalized and less privileged, largely unknown, denied, or ignored people in our societies. As such, it stands as a success, although the controversy it generated upon publication and low quality of pictures has very slightly diminished its overall notion. Perhaps, the cost of the book is less expensive and affordable for common man.

This book however, must not be judged by its cover, but more importantly by its content .Although, it is highly recommended for those who are interested in development work. NGO sector will find this book more informative and may learn lesson from OPP's achievement which is clearly describes in the book with author's zeal and interest. Indeed, this book is also very useful and priceless, particularly for the scholars, students of social sciences, urban town planners, and policy makers by enabling them to adapt the model to deal with their own urban sanitation challenges.

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