

# What went wrong with HPSP?

DR M KABIR

**B**EFORE introduction of the Health and Population Sector Programme in 1998 the modality of service delivery was doorstep services. Our success in health and family planning was widely acclaimed then by the international community. The health and family planning programme at that time was moving ahead expectedly with rapid transition in fertility. Infant and child mortality also declined considerably despite the fact that it is still high in Bangladesh. The progress in family planning programme has been interrupted by sudden shift in the service delivery system. This is mainly due to the reason that donor agencies wanted it differently with the emphasis on sustainability and quality of services. The donor agencies helped the government to shift from home delivery to community based one stop services hurriedly without rigorous experimentation as well as not taking the views of the beneficiaries whether they would avail the services if the services are being provided from static clinic. Some researches were undertaken within a short span of time and the decision was taken so hurriedly that it failed to provide true picture of the constraints of the new system.

The rationale behind the shifting from home delivery to the community clinic based services by the donor communities was to expand access to basic services and improving the quality of services both in the GO and NGO sectors. The utilization of existing capacities and facilities particularly by vulnerable women and children, without compromising on the quality has been emphasized in the HPSP document. The Bangladesh government's 1998 Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) strategy reflects many of the policies outlined in the ICPD programme of action. The strategy calls for greater integration of family planning with health, ongoing stakeholders' involvement in design and monitoring, focus on the users of services rather than demographic targets, improved quality of care, and a wider range of reproductive health services, with increased attention to maternal and adolescent health care, provided as a part of an "essential services package" (ESP). They also viewed that present service delivery system was not cost effective since field workers did not visit the households regularly. Given that family welfare assistants spend a high proportion of their workdays in travelling, alternative service delivery strategy should be considered that can reduce travel time and increase client contact time. The existence of two overlapping systems of service delivery has important implications for the costs of family service delivery. Acceptors of methods at clinics also receive visits at home, and home visits constitute a significant part of the total costs per couple year protection. If the number of home visits for clinic method acceptors were reduced, then the costs per couple year protection would decrease.

In view of the above considerations and recent emphasis on reproductive health of women, alternative service delivery has been designed i.e. service delivery through community based static clinics. The rationale behind this is as well as meetings with the donor communities. The Health and Population Sector Strategy outlined the rationale for prioritizing public expenditure (including donor support) in favour of an Essential Service Package of public health, reproductive and child health, and (limited) curative services. Has all this been implemented in the HPSP? This remained in the document without any implementation of the ideas conceptualized in the HPSP. The plan envisaged a series of reform measures over the five-year period (1998-2003) that would, singly and collectively, materially improve the lives of the people. These included: unification of the bifurcated structures in government; provision of a one stop delivery modality locally; reorganization and decentralization of decision making; improvements in management capacity and competencies; and, enhanced resource mobilization. What are our experiences by the beginning of the fifth year of the HPSP? We know that very few community clinics were constructed as per document.

In terms of health and nutrition status Bangladesh still lags behind. The reasons for these, as identified, are poverty, illiteracy and largely inadequate health care. In Bangladesh 70 per cent mothers and children suffer from malnutrition. Every day 600 children die due to

malnutrition and every year 28,000 mothers die due to pregnancy related diseases. Among the children under five years of age two thirds suffer from malnutrition. Children aged between 6 and 7 months do not have proper growth. During the childbirth, four expecting mothers die out of 1000 births. Roughly one in 10 deliveries takes place at home. One third of such deliveries suffer from pregnancy related post delivery diseases. One out of nine children dies before reaching the age of five. Among the poorest the rate is one out of six. It is also known that low birth weight of the child is one of the major causes of child mortality in Bangladesh. In this context the HPSP programme was introduced with the financial support from the World Bank. But it was implemented without any extensive piloting to get the experiences from home delivery services to bolster static clinic based services. In fact, as said earlier, the system was suddenly implemented, without developing the needed infrastructure i.e. the community clinic. This has resulted in many setbacks in the family planning service delivery system. The field workers stopped visiting the households. It is not known what happened with the women who used to get the supplies from the field workers especially the pills and the condoms. The 1999-2000 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey indicates that discontinuation of pill increased. Among the pill users almost half of

ing in some areas say, one district or one upazila from each geographical division? Why we thought community clinic will be an important strategy for our poor women without taking experience of existing Union Health and Family Welfare Centres? Different studies found that utilization of UHFWC is unexpectedly low. Did we use these experiences when we planned to introduce community clinic? Did we think about better utilization of existing satellite clinics? Could we not experiment it on a small scale through the existing fixed satellite clinics by placing trained Health Assistants and Family Welfare Assistants there? Why we failed to do that before taking such an important shift in service delivery system? TFIPP interventions also indicated that maternal and child health services could be substantially improved through existing fixed satellite clinics by providing appropriate training to the providers along with other facilities such as waiting facility of the mothers. Why this experience is not considered to determine the new strategy of service delivery?

Until 1998 the family planning programme was a vertical programme but the Health and Population Sector Programme is currently running as horizontal programme. For a long time TFPOs had been emotionally attached to the upazila health and family planning administration but with the introduction of HPSP they found

The same experience we have from the UHFWC and it is one of the important reasons for low utilization of UHFWC besides other reasons.

What are then the lessons learned from the HPSP? A number of them can be identified. Since it is not tested rigorously to shift from the existing system to one stop service delivery system, the government has failed to implement it as per document. As a result of that poor clients from rural areas are being deprived from home delivery services as well as services from the proposed community clinic. It is not known where from the eligible clients who used to get the supplies from the field workers are now getting the services. What they do when they experience side-effects of a method; with whom do they counsel now? Why pill discontinuation has been increasing although use of pill is said to have significantly increased? What effect it has on the static situation of fertility? Previously women who faced unwanted pregnancies would go for MR services by the advice of the field workers. What these women do now in the absence of any field workers' visit also in the absence of any services from the community clinic? If they do not get this counselling then they would obviously go to traditional dais or quacks to terminate their pregnancies, which means increasing the risk of maternal mortality.

The bidding system introduced for NGOs for special services in HPSP is poorly conceptualized without understanding the implications of the quality of service delivery. On the one hand we are talking about quality of services and on the other, we have introduced bidding system for the NGOs. Bidding system does not ensure quality of services. The bidder's aim is to get the tender and therefore the incumbent may compromise many quality elements to get the tender. The bidders always quote lower price to get the tender. How this bidding system ensures quality of services is not spelled out in the document. On the other hand the introduction of bidding system left some NGOs without work subject to the given technical competence, manpower, logistics and infrastructure for some special services. The important question is, with the current situation of HPSP what now would happen in the achievement of replacement fertility? This needs immediate attention to the identification of HPSP operational problems and understanding the factors those are constraints for implementation of HPSP in phase two which will begin in July next year. To address the problem and to consider new strategy an evaluation is urgently required.

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# Expectations run high as Koizumi goes to Pyongyang

many in Japan believe that whatever the outcome of the summit, a key issue will be how much Japan should give North Korea as compensation for past actions. Japan is not supposed to agree on the term compensation, though willing to provide handsome amount to North Korea in the form of official development assistance. For North Korea, a country in dire need of cash assistance from outside sources, rejecting Japanese position will no doubt be a difficult choice.

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**J**APANESE Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is to visit North Korea today on a historic trip that many in Japan consider having the potential of preparing the ground for a new era of cooperation and understanding, which might put an effective end to the Cold War political mould still being practiced in North East Asia. This is the first ever visit by a Japanese head of the government to the country that the most important economic and political partner of Tokyo has marked as one of the three 'axis of evil'. The two countries do not have any formal diplomatic relations and during the Cold War period they firmly belonged to rival camps, a reality that continued to hamper the process of finding a common ground for mutual understanding even long after the main components of that war of words became partners in world politics burying their bitter rivalry.

The expectations from today's summit are high on both sides. The Japanese delegation would like to see North Korea being sincere in resolving outstanding issues that Tokyo considers vital for the start of any meaningful dialogue between the two sides that would pave the way towards normalization of relations. Pyongyang, on the other hand, would expect that Koizumi apologize for Japan's past colonial rule over Korean peninsula and come up with a clear commitment of helping North Korea finding its right place in the new economic setting that the process of globalization has initiated.

It has been reported in the Japanese press that the prime minister is also to convey a message from the US President George W. Bush that Washington had not closed the door to dialogue, but would like to see North Korea reducing its military capabilities before any such negotiation takes place. From the North Korean side, on the other hand, their leader is expected to ask Koizumi to serve as a diplomatic bridge to the United States, and if the request is made, Koizumi is to notify President Bush of Kim's hope for an improved relation. This makes the third party involvement at the bilateral summit quite obvious.

The stake, as a result, is high for both sides and this raises the prospect that something meaningful might come out of the summit that many still think to be the realization of an absurdity. In a written interview with the Japanese wire service Kyodo News on the eve of Koizumi's trip to Pyongyang, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il termed the visit as an 'epoch making chance' in achieving the goal of normalizing diplomatic ties with Japan. "I welcome Prime Minister Koizumi's visit and believe that our meeting will bring good results," he said.

Earlier, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon met the Japanese prime minister in New



Junichiro Koizumi

York and told him that North Korea hopes Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang will pave the way for the two countries to develop good relations. The Japanese government sees some positive signs in comments made particularly by the North Korean leader. But as there are number of stumbling blocks that might appear too difficult to overcome during the day long summit, the government would like to concentrate more on what the North Korean leader says during the landmark summit.

But at the same time, taking note of such positive gestures coming from Pyongyang, the Japanese government is likely to ask North Korea to resume normalization talks as early as October. Japan is concerned that any change in international situation regarding North Korea could adversely affect Tokyo's relations with Pyongyang, and to prevent such a worst-case scenario Japan is willing to accelerate diplomatic efforts.

But many in Japan believe that whatever the outcome of the summit, a key issue will be how much Japan should give North Korea as compensation for past actions. Japan is not supposed to agree on the term compensation, though willing to provide handsome amount to North Korea in the form of official development assistance. For North Korea, a country in dire need of cash assistance from outside sources, rejecting Japanese position will no doubt be a difficult choice. So, here too, the optimism seems to be running equally high.

# If wishes were horses

PROFESSOR ABDUL MANNAN

**A**S a nation we love to dream. Perhaps that is why we even have a proverb in Bangla which says "dreaming of lakh taka while laying under a tattered quilt." These days lakh taka, however, is not something one needs to talk about; we have learnt to talk in terms of millions and billions. Of course some of our dreams and wishes once in a while do become reality. History stands as witness. Since our glorious days of War of Liberation we are dreaming and wishing lots of good things to happen. All successive governments talked about their dreams and wishes. It is all about alleviation of people's misery. However, so far it has been illusory.

Recently our learned communication minister made public two of his very ambitious dreams. The first is running a high-speed train between Dhaka and Chittagong, 300 kilometers per hour. No joking. Some of my students expressed their concern as I may not be available to them for discussion at odd hours as I would always be running to take the next train to Chittagong, where I hail from. My mother is worried as her beloved son will always be running away to take the next train out from Chittagong to his new work place in Dhaka. Every one has his or her own reasons to become worried or happy after hearing our communication minister's dream. Well I was happy.

Railway came to this part of the subcontinent towards the end of nineteenth century when Assam Bengal Railway (a privately owned company incorporated in England) started its operation in 1895. More than hundred years have passed in between. We witnessed the partition of the subcontinent and birth of Bangladesh. Except for the introduction of couple of inter city trains, the railway system has shown no sign of any improvement in customer service during this period. I often have to travel in Dhaka-Chittagong mail which leaves Dhaka and Chittagong simultaneously at 10.30 p.m. The air conditioning of the compartments seldom works. Talk to the attendants and they will remind you that these coaches were procured in the late sixties. The toilets are soiled and unclean. Most of the coaches would often not have any running water. Running of night trains without lights is a routine matter.

A recent survey conducted by a widely circulated weekly disclosed that 90 per cent of our trains run late. Few years back newspapers ran a story that one of the local passenger trains' engine driver was found missing for about an hours. He went to the local bazaar to procure some rice for his daughter's wedding! The passengers can wait. Now comes the announcement of 300 kilometer per hour train. I console my mother and my students: well this is one such dream, which I would definitely love to see materialize during my lifetime. Unfortunately past experience indicates otherwise. Politicians love sensations and rhetoric. Pakistan's late President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto excelled in this art. Once he was making his usual fiery speech in his own constituency, Larkana. It was election time. His opponents accused him of 'drinking.' A very serious allegation indeed in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Seeing the huge gathering Bhutto could not keep his cool. Yes, I drink Bhutto, declared at the top of his voice amidst thunderous applause (few people seldom know what they are applauding for in such gatherings). He removed his favourite duckbill cap and his coat. I do not drink the blood of the poor people that my opponents do, thundered Bhutto while removing his shirt. Of course

that is what politics is all about. Well, few politicians could beat late Bhutto in political rhetoric.

The second dream which our honourable communication minister announced was his plan to have our own fast moving monorail in Dhaka city at a cost of about half a billion US dollar! Ah what a relief. No rickshaw, no menacing mini-buses and three-wheelers. Dark days for the ever speeding buses and the villainous taxi cab drivers. Some readers of The Daily Star have even suggested the price of monorail tickets. It is always good to have long-term plans. In many cities in the world have fast moving monorails. A letter writer in DS informed the readers that the first monorail in the world was commissioned in Wuppertal, Germany in 1901. In 1959 the world famous theme park Disneyland in Anaheim, California had its own internal monorail as a commuter transport within the park area. Seattle, Washington had a purpose built monorail dating back to 1962 linking the downtown Seattle with the Word Trade Fair. Kuala Lumpur would be having its own monorail inaugurated sometimes this year. Perhaps that's it. Bangladesh is next in line. Well there is no harm in dreaming.

Everyday I have to pass through Airport Road to Gulshan taking the Bishwa Road diversion (Progoti Sarani) and pass by the American Embassy. No one can miss the three police check posts on this route: the first one between airport crossing and Bishwa Road turning (Khilkhet), the second one after you have crossed the Progoti Sarani rail crossing and the last one at the United Nations roundabout. At each of these check points one would not miss half a dozen smartly poised law-enforcing policemen keeping an eye on all passing vehicles. You are lucky if you do not have your Middle East returnee uncle traveling in your car or microbus with the bulging luggage in the back seat. The ever-vigilant policemen are not interested to check the normal commuter vehicles (except few taxicabs). It's a regular traffic chaos at least at Progoti Sarani rail crossing. But as the clock ticks to about 11.00 a.m. the check posts disappear because the last plane from the Middle East have already landed at ZIA couple of hours back. I always wished if the government would be kind enough to instruct the check post people to stop playing customs officers and get back to their normal duties, travelling on this route would be much more comfortable and hassle free. Well, the saying goes 'if wishes were horses...'

I will conclude with a story from a Czech movie, which I watched way back in 1973 when the film societies in this country were very active. Two poor orphans in Prague always wished to have a horse of their own. Both started saving small amounts of money from their daily earnings. Finally they could save enough to buy an old limping horse from a cunning horse trader. Both were overjoyed to see their life-long dream come true. They mounted the horse and began to parade the streets of Prague. The world seemed so small to them! The joy was very short lived. An ever-vigilant Prague policeman stopped them and made them dismount. Where did you get the horse? the nasty policeman asked. Well, how could a law-abiding policeman believe the two wretched orphans? They were huddled at the back of the police truck and the horse returned to the cunning horse trader. Of course there was a low-key conversation between the trader and the policeman. Well, wishes perhaps should sometimes not be horses.

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that chain of command was changed -- MO-MCH was taking all types of decisions. MO-MCH was also given supervisory roles. Did we take those into consideration while shifting the home delivery to static clinic delivery? Did we consider implications of those situations on the performance of the programme? Did we consider MO-MCH would not have enough time for field supervision if he/she is involved with administration? What was our experience when we constructed UHFWC? Did we take into account those experiences in the new strategy when UHFWCs were constructed on donated land and their location? Whether the UHFWC is situated in the middle of the union so that 25,000-30,000 population can receive the services from equidistance? Are we not having the same experiences from the CC already constructed? As per strategy an average population of 6,000 would receive the services from a community clinic. This 6,000 come from about 3-4 villages (since average size of a village population is between 1500-2000). The CC will be obviously constructed at the doorstep of an influential person who would donate the land. If it is so then the distance of the village from the community clinic for six thousands population will be a dispersed

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

**T**HE rather hackneyed 'war of words' or 'wordy war' seems to have again flared up between the two top leaders of India and Pakistan, one accusing the other of publicly committing nuisance, as if the military stand-off of about a million soldiers of the two countries on Kashmir front, was not enough for them for displaying further 'fire-works' to bumuse their own people and at the same time amuse their neighbours and the world community. And the occasion, most befittingly chosen, was their Independence Day celebrations. But such occasional or 'seasonal' 'cross-border wordy warfare' is nothing new for their peoples. They have become accustomed to the 'art' of their leaders' playing to their 'home-gallery'. So they are always caught with their pants down!

Let us peruse some samples of the 'fire-words', with their distinctive features. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee accused, in his 15 August Independence Day statement, that Pakistan was following a double-standard on terrorism, saying that Pakistan, on one hand had joined the international community to fight terrorism, on the other hand it is 'sponsoring' terrorism in Kashmir. Vajpayee also accused Pakistan of trying to 'grab' Kashmir by fomenting cross-border terrorism as they had 'not succeeded in war'. To further please his 'home-gallery', Vajpayee declared that Kashmir was *atut ang* of India (integral part of India) and it would remain so. But Vajpayee was blowing hot and cold at the same breath when he offered to hold dialogue on all issues with Pakistan if the atmosphere was 'conducive'. (But what is there left for talks on Kashmir when he had already declared it as 'integral part' of India, except the question of returning to India of the part of Kashmir now administered by Pakistan? (Why the Pakistani leaders keep mum over it when they go on repeating to discuss all issues including Kashmir?))

However Gen. Musharraf played his own 'cards' when he insisted, in his 14 August speech, that Pakistan was only supporting Kashmiris' struggle for right of self-determination, extending them moral, political and diplomatic

support and Pakistan had nothing to do with whatever was happening in Indian Kashmir. Gen. Musharraf also described the elections in the Indian Kashmir as another effort to give a mark of legitimacy of its (India's) illegal occupation of Kashmir.

Hitting back to these comments of Pakistan's military ruler, Vajpayee said that "those who call election in Kashmir a farce, should not-teach us lessons in democracy. The should look into their own house." So goes on the rattlings!  
**Political 'gimmicks' and 'mimicries':** Such political 'gimmicks' and 'mimicries' on the part of the ruling party leaders in both countries are not anything new. The peoples of both the countries have been watching them for the last five decades or so. Whenever, the ruling party faces any domestic problem in either country, it invariably brings out its 'trump card' of Kashmir raising a hue and cry to prove themselves as national heroes and play successfully to the home gallery either to win votes or divert people's attention from burning domestic problems. Such calling of names of one another by the leaders of the two countries, like spoilt street urchins has become so nauseous that it now appears totally ridiculous, making them laughing stocks before the world.

**Neck on line?** Here it should be noted that Vajpayee, as an elected leader enjoys certain advantages over army ruler Musharraf in raising 'waves' in a clam sea. In fact, with up-coming elections in hand, Musharraf is now walking on a tight-rope surrounded by many 'disgruntled elements', call them anti-army rule democratic forces, or terrorists, or Islamic militants. Musharraf has literally put his hands in the honest's nest at the behest of his distant friends. No doubt, he has started to feel the pinch, but it is too late for him to say 'no' to US demands to continue war against fleeing Al-Qaida 'horde', now said to be hiding in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan. He has already banned two Pakistan based terrorist outfits and arrested thousands of militants, under pressure from US and repeated demands made by India, identifying these organizations as responsible for bombings at Srinagar Assembly building and Delhi Parliament building. Pakistan security forces are also

in action in the frontier region to hunt out the Al-Qaida activists. So Musharraf's neck is already on the line and if he succeeds to come out with flying colours with his head safe and sound, that would be a wonderful performance on his part.

In fact, Gen Musharraf is sitting on a hot seat of power, particularly since his playing a key-role alongside America in its war on terror in Afghanistan. It is true that he had not only bet his future but had literally mortgaged it too, in a wider context, with US' strategic interest in this region. And that is what had caused the rapid fall in his popularity ratings which were riding high when he rode to power in 1999 ousting an elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The people of Pakistan then embraced him with open arms as a great saviour of the nation from the humiliation when Pakistan was buckled by America to withdraw its forces from the Kargil sector in Kashmir. Perhaps no Pakistani had then even dreamt that within a year or so the whole political scenario would change so rapidly, forcing Musharraf to follow the same 'route' earlier treaded by Nawaz Sharif. After his capitulation in Kargil, under US pressure which was mainly aimed at boosting Vajpayee's morale in fighting then up-coming elections which he did very successfully, Nawaz Sharif did not stop there. He had to go further to launch a campaign against Al-Qaida and Taliban-trained militants, involved in criminal activities in Pakistan, particularly in sectarian violence and even had to ask the Taliban government in Kabul to close down the Afghan-based training centres and stop infiltration of such trained militants in Pakistan, exactly what Vajpayee government has asked Musharraf to do across the LoC. Sharif even ordered to monitor the activities of some ten thousand Madrasas which were said to be linked with those Taliban-trained militants overtly or covertly. And that was perhaps the last straw on Sharif's back. Perhaps Musharraf had not learnt any lesson from the 'root' cause of Sharif's fall and his emergence as a 'saviour'. But many in Pakistan think today that they had been betrayed and their trust and overwhelming support for him has been totally misused for a wrong cause. Naturally the angry reaction begins and no wonder that some

people have already started talking tough against Musharraf's policy. **Shouldn't miss the signal:** Now is the time for Musharraf to assess what his nation wants and whether his line of action is appropriate to achieve that national expectations, not economically, but politically. Instead of serving as a linchpin of some distant mentors, Musharraf should look to the ground reality before he takes another leap in the dark. Besides the Kashmir issue which seems to be in a melting pot, Iraq will be a test-case for him. However, it is heartening to note that Musharraf had already read the clear writings or the wall painted by the European Union (EU), the Arab League and a number of distinguished world leaders, including former South African President Nelson Mandela against President Bush's crazy Iraq policy. In his last interview with the BBC, the Pakistan President had warned that a US attack on Iraq would have "really negative repercussions on the Islamic world," adding, that though Pakistan government still back President Bush's war on terrorism "that does not mean we can start participating in activities all around the world." He has, no doubt, touched the right chord. But mere face saving tip-services won't do. The people of Pakistan will now expect him to take a more bold and an unambiguous policy vis-a-vis Bush's off and on war cry against "evil" regimes, which of course does not include Israel which is busy in annihilating Palestinian 'terrorists' with the 'blessings' of Bush.

The growing 'ground-swell' against Bush's stance against Iraq throughout the world, including his close allies in Europe and Arab World, has given out a clear signal for America. Even Bush's closest ally and in 'second-in-command' war against terror, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is now having problem with his own party men and Britons at large, majority of whom are opposed to Britain's siding with America in its new adventure (in Iraq). This undoubtedly shows which way the political wind is blowing. Gen Musharraf should not miss the signal.

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