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A squandered mandate: how PPP failed Larkana

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Master of Science in Journalism



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A Squandered Mandate: How PPP failed Larkana

This Capstone Project report is submitted to the Faculty of Journalism as partial fulfillment
Masters of Science in Journalism degree

by

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Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi

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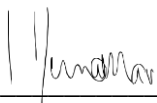
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Dedication

To the people of Larkana who deserved better.

Earlier this year in March, on the occasion of former prime minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's 40th death anniversary, PPP took a rally from Karachi to Larkana¹ via train and thousands gathered at every stop to wave at 'Caravan-e-Bhutto'. What most missed though was the abject poverty written all over the person of the little boys who ran alongside the train as it slowed to a halt in Larkana. Many of the children were barefoot, their collars hung loose and their clothes bore holes, but they waved at the caravan with all the energy they could muster, hope etched all over their faces. If PPP's association with Larkana were to be summarized in one visual, it would certainly be this; a story of broken promises and abandonment.

In this story, I have attempted to capture the history of the Bhutto family's association with Larkana; how their influence in the district as well as their hold over it grew over time, how that shaped the district's identity and continues to do so, and lastly, how their party, the PPP, squandered the mandate in Larkana.

Where the story begins

The association of the Bhutto family with Larkana is a story of extraordinary ambition, immense power, lost love and intrigue, and loses nothing in the retelling. Historian Stanley Wolpert wrote of the Bhutto family that:

“As far back as history traces them, Bhuttos have been adroit at seizing whatever opportunities life offered, equally ready to move on or to change their faith if they deemed it expedient for survival's sake, determined to overcome drought, famine, or the fiercest of adversaries in struggling to advance themselves and the fortunes of their clever family.”²

Their navigation of the city's politics over the past three hundred years and rise from being dependent upon the web of *tapedars*³ and collectors that ruled Larkana under the British to now, when the city is known by their name, couldn't be described better. At one point, the family owned “250,000 acres spread over Larkana, Sukkur and Hyderabad.”⁴ At least six generations of the family are buried in Larkana.

¹ Note: Larkana district is divided into four talukas; Dokri, Bakrani, Larkana, Ratodero. For the purpose of this paper, I will mostly be referencing Larkana district, not Larkana Division or Larkana city unless I specifically mention otherwise.

² Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan*, (Oxford University Press 1994) Page 8.

³ Village accountant

⁴Madan Gopal Chitkara, *Benazir, A Profile*, (APH Publishing Corporation 1996), Page 17.

The earliest Bhutto to leave his mark on the pages of Larkana's history is Pir Baksh Khan Bhutto under whose leadership the district first surfaced as a possible seat of power for Bhutto's. He fought "many battles in Larkana," where he established Bhutto power (Wolpert quoting Shah Nawaz Memoirs).⁵ But more importantly, he knew when to concede defeat and was able to acquire firm control "over his vast tracts of Bhutto land around Larkana, Sukkur, and Khairpur . . . [when he] swore allegiance to the new Talpur rulers of Sindh."⁶

Pir Baksh's son, Doda Khan Bhutto had three sons one of whom Khuda Baksh Bhutto (from whom Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and his descendants trace their lineage) separated from the larger clan over a domestic dispute and settled in Garhi Khuda Baksh. Little is known about the details of the dispute but journalist Ali Bhutto wrote in a piece for Newline that Khuda Baksh paid a hefty price for separating from the family. Ali writes that "a notice dated August 27, 1887 from C.B. Pritchard, the Acting Commissioner in Sindh reveals that Khuda Baksh's share of the landholdings was significantly smaller in size than the other members of his family, including his brothers . . . the sibling that moved away received the smallest share of property."⁷

However, it is Khuda Baksh's son, Ghulam Mir Murtaza Bhutto, perhaps the most daring and resourceful of the earlier Bhuttos after whom the Bhutto residence Al Murtaza and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's (Z.A. Bhutto) elder son were also named, whose antics made the Bhuttos infamous in British-Indian Sindh and him the stuff of legend. Mir Murtaza "fell in love with the beautiful Sindhi mistress of Larkana's British collector-magistrate, Colonel Mayhew"⁸; he survived several attempts by Mayhew to falsely implicate him in murder cases as well as his exile in Kabul where he lived for many years before returning to Sindh on a boat that capsized (he survived) along with all his gold; later he cheated death once again when the Black Plague reached Sindh in 1899, all in one lifetime⁹ (Wolpert quoting Shah Nawaz Memoirs).

His son, Shahnawaz Bhutto, was 10 when his father passed away due to poisoning and he inherited the vast Bhutto lands and the title of the head of the family. When Shahnawaz became the head of the Bhutto family and their estates in Larkana, Al-Murtaza and the district witnessed visits from some of the biggest political personalities of the day and age. Here onwards,

⁵ Wolpert, Page 9.

⁶ Wolpert, Page 9.

⁷ Ali Bhutto, *Murder Ink*, Newline, June 23, 2018.

⁸ Wolpert, Page 10.

⁹ Wolpert, Pages 8-15.

the district's identity became increasingly intertwined with that of the Bhutto family. Wolpert writes that in 1928, "Jinnah stayed with Shah Nawaz in the Bhutto compound's grand house Al-Murtaza, in Larkana, and may well have heard some of Zulfi's earliest cries."¹⁰

Under the charismatic Z.A. Bhutto, about whom journalist Oriana Fallaci wrote that "if Bhutto goes, Pakistan will be erased from the map,"¹¹ the Bhutto family's hold on Larkana became even stronger as did the pride of the people of Larkana in the Bhuttos. In addition to Z.A Bhutto's own vast property in Larkana, "his first wife's huge Larkana estate had come to him after the death of her father, Wadero Ahmed Khan Bhutto"¹². Large landowners in rural Sindh are nothing short of demigods. When Z.A Bhutto became prime minister, he would visit Larkana often and the simple people of the district witnessed at close range the Bhutto family's tryst with power.

His birthdays and the celebratory atmosphere that would permeate Larkana on those occasions is something that the older residents of the district recall even today. On a visit to Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, I met a senior resident, Ali Khan, who had brought a family to tour the mausoleum. Khan recalled trailing along with Bhutto's entourage on their visits to Larkana when he was a young man in his early twenties. "In the winter months, the Bhutto men would come with their rifles and bring friends from the city," said Khan, adding that the lands around Ratodero used to be full of game then, and are still today, though less so. "For the entire district, it would be an occasion of great celebration and the towns would be abuzz with excitement," said Khan. "Once even Ayub Khan accompanied him here on his visit."

On his 45th birthday, Zulfiqar flew to Larkana to celebrate his birthday and "distributed land deeds to 105 thitherto landless peasants from every part of Sindh," writes Wolpert. "Many of the peasants cried as they kissed the deeds, bowing to kiss Sindh's red dust from their president's shoes and then dancing with happiness. To such *haris* of Sindh, he was, indeed. Raja (king) not just of Larkana but of the entire land."¹³

While researching for this paper, I met two political figures who have been closely associated with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Larkana; Pakistan Muslim League-Functional's Mehtab Rashidi and PPP's Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro. Both of them were

¹⁰ Wolpert, Page 24.

¹¹ Oriana Fallaci, *Interview with History*, (Houghton Mifflin Company), Page 3.

¹² Wolpert, Page 64.

¹³ Wolpert, Page 269.

born and raised in Larkana district, both have been closely affiliated with the Bhuttos and both have campaigned for and contested elections from the district. Khuhro, who has served for decades as PPP's man in Larkana, first contested elections in Sindh in 1988 and has been elected 7 times since, losing the 2018 elections due to his nomination papers being rejected. Rashidi's parents and immediate relatives were on family terms with the Bhuttos. "A single wall separated our family home in Naudero from that of Amir Begum's (Zulfiqar's first wife)," she recalled. A prominent media personality in Sindh, Rashidi has served under the Sindh government since 1988. She married into the Pir Pagara family which traces its own historical lineage in Larkana. She contested elections in Larkana against PPP in 2013 and lost, but managed to amass 32,006 votes.¹⁴

Khuhro and Rashidi spoke at length about Z.A. Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto's ties with Larkana, the projects initiated and completed by PPP government in the district since, it's state today as well as the road ahead. Rashidi answered every question directly and confidently, while looking straight into my eyes; Khuhro would take long detours and speak at length about irrelevant matters before partially addressing my questions, his eyes darting around the room to see how the other people present were reacting to the conversation. Rashidi's house was filled with mementos of her children and grandchildren; PPP leadership's pictures adorned the narrow hallway leading to Khuhro's office (located at the back of his house) which was filled with men waiting their turn, reminding me of the traditional *autaaqs* (public spaces for men to hold evening gatherings) of Sindh. Rashidi did not flinch even while speaking about the low points in her career where it intersected with Larkana; Khuhro, in my opinion, failed to adequately defend even the high points of his career when he had been serving in Larkana.

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"In my opinion, everyone (in the Bhutto family) took Larkana for granted," said Rashidi, in response to my query about whether Benazir had ever shared her vision for Larkana. "It is ours after all, where will it go," she said with a theatrical shrug, adding after a pause with emphasis "with the exception of Zulfiqar Bhutto". Rashidi elaborated that she saw Z.A Bhutto's vision first hand when she was serving as his polling agent while he was contesting elections from Larkana. "Despite being a short route, the journey from Naudero to Larkana would take us an hour or even

¹⁴ For number source see: Habib Khan Ghori, *PTI to field candidates against Zardari, Bilawal in by-polls*, Dawn News, Dec 21, 2016

longer because the track was a *katcha*¹⁵ route,” she said. “Bhutto built all these roads; Naudero to Larkana, Larkana to Sukkur, Larkana to Qambar Shahdaadkot; now all these roads have been built anew but even back then, he tried to connect all these small villages through an elaborate network of roads.”

She added that Bhutto took several other measures that reflected his vision for this hometown. “A very big conference was held on the Mohenjo Daro titled ‘Sindh Through Centuries’,” said Rashidi. “Bhutto wanted to use the archeological history of Larkana to bring the entire world to the district; scholars and tourists arrived from all over the world to be a part of the event,” she added. “*Baithaks* and musical evenings were held and many research-oriented articles were written by Pakistanis and foreign scholars that were compiled and published in two or three volumes,” she said.

Khuhro, while speaking about the 70’s to 90’s time period, emphasized that interest in Larkana from the center (and the funding that came with it) rose and waned as premiership was repeatedly acquired and lost by the Bhuttos, which affected the district’s development. “Larkana is primarily an agricultural economy and an attempt was made to boost it,” said Khuhro, while speaking about Z.A Bhutto’s tenure. “Several mills were built in the district; the public sector invested in sugar mill, textile and woolen mills in Larkana and Shahdadkot,” he added. “Flour and rice husking mills were also set up.” Khuhro and Rashidi both mentioned that the vision for Larkana under Z.A Bhutto’s tenure was to move the district towards industrialization. “He wanted to encourage labor-intensive operations that would create jobs,” said Khuhro.

Khuhro didn’t take kindly to several attempts on my part to enquire about how this vision has been squandered by the PPP-controlled provincial and district governments in the 40 years since Zulfiqar’s death. He did, however, elaborate upon the role played by the changing federal government in this process. “After Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s short-lived tenure, lasting a ‘mere’ four or five years, Zia-ul-Haq came to power and the government’s attention, once again shifted to the cities,” said Khuhro. “His policies were not labor-friendly and slowly all the mills (private and public sector initiated) – except the sugar mills -- began to shut down, and remained shut for several years,” he added. Khuhro added that the residents of Larkana struggled to restart the mills but without success due to limited funds. “Larkana became a desolate state,” said Khuhro. “Nothing much was done to support local labor and it continued to degenerate.”

¹⁵ Unpaved road.

“Begum Sahiba’s (Benazir Bhutto) role was intermittent, once for 2.75 years and once for 1.75 years – she didn’t get a 5-year term.” said Khuhro, adding that she was keenly interested in Larkana’s development. “She established a State Life Insurance building and a Civic Centre in Larkana city similar to the ones in Karachi,” he said. “Attempts were also made to extend the road network.” Khuhro explained that Benazir was very keen on measures that supported women’s rights. “The First Women Bank was established and one of its branches was established in Larkana as well,” said Khuhro, adding that during her tenure women began to be recruited in police and women’s police stations were set up in Larkana. “When you put them in words, these developments seem small, but they were carried out for the betterment of Larkana,” said Khuhro. Despite leaving a bitterly contested legacy at the national level, like her father, Benazir was the darling of Larkana and even today, she is referred to by the people as *shaheed rani*¹⁶.

Where Larkana stands today

“In the gutter. Pathetic. Horrible.” This is how Rashidi described the conditions of Larkana today. “I don’t know what words to use to describe the conditions of Larkana today because it pains me,” she added. “Larkana has had a glorious past.” Rashidi said that there used to be an old, pre-partition Sindhi saying about Larkana:

Je hunjae narun ta ghum larkanu

Translated: *If you have the money, visit Larkana*

“How beautiful must a place be for its living standards, its people, and its activities to be lauded this way as wonders out of reach of the less well off,” she said, adding that today, the inverse of the same saying is true. “Now the people of Larkana say that if they had another option, they would leave the place.” Rashidi added that today she would say of Larkana:

Je hunjaye narun ta chadh larkarun

Translated: *If you have the money, leave Larkana.*

“People deserve basic amenities; your city’s gutters should flow cleanly, you should get clean drinking water, your streets should be regularly cleaned, your schools should offer good education and jobs should be awarded on merit instead of being limited to the highest bidder,” said Rashidi, while explaining the magnitude of the failure of successive PPP governments in Larkana.

¹⁶ Martyred queen

“The cadet college is in their (Bhutto family’s) name, the medical university is in their name¹⁷; Shaheed Benazir Bhutto this, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto that; but if only you could change the fate of a place by naming it [after yourself],” said Rashidi. “The political will and vision that was needed to transform Larkana was missing in PPP.”

Today, Larkana district’s total population numbers a little over 1.5 million and comprises of 260,000 plus households¹⁸. But far from becoming the Paris of Pakistan or even coming anywhere near the industrial hub that Bhutto envisioned, Larkana is failing to provide basic life chances to its residents.

Larkana’s Demographics¹⁹

	Population	No of Households
Rural	822,754	140,795
Urban	701,637	120,536
Total	1,524,391	261,331

In my visit to the district, I met policemen, laborers, mechanics, farmers and bureaucrats who were from Larkana and had lived there for decades; they spoke about their standards of living, the public amenities available to them and how they were functioning, as well as how this has changed over the past few decades under PPP, and what the future holds for Larkana. Their disillusionment with PPP’s performance spoke volumes about the party’s failure to deliver at every level of government in the district. “*Hitay sabh thikar aahay* [all is stone here],” said a police officer (requesting anonymity) who has been serving at the commissioner house in Larkana since the past eight years and was well acquainted with the district. “When wheat is kept in *goonday* [containers] and left to rot, it turns into *bhoosa* [dried hay],” he explained. “Now only *bhoosa* is left of Larkana and all that remains is to set it alight - how can you possibly make roti out of it?” he asked, a dejected smile on his face. The policeman’s disillusionment with the level of progress in Larkana seems to be shared by many others in the district (see figure below).

¹⁷ Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University Larkana.

¹⁸ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Census 2017, Larkana District Summary.

¹⁹ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Population and Housing Census Records*, 2017.

Percentage Distribution of Larkana’s households by perception of their economic situation as compared to the year before²⁰

	Much Worse	Worse	Same	Better	Much Better
Rural	6.86	24.45	46.57	18.91	3.22
Urban	1.29	31.47	55.19	10.61	1.44
Total	4.39	27.57	50.40	15.22	2.43

The police officer explained how the bureaucrats of Larkana were eating away at the district and how their corrupt methods have, over time, become a part of local recruitment culture. “There is a lot of *parchi* [favoritism and political interference in appointments] under PPP’s governments but at least Sindhis get appointed, unlike what happens under other governments,” he said, adding that about 1200 officers had been appointed from Larkana under Asif Zardari’s government in 2008. Several other officers I met who were serving as a part of the district government echoed the same sentiment and defended PPP’s regressive policies because, in their view, the little attention the district has received in terms of allocation and disbursement of funds as well as job creation is when the Bhuttos are in power. “It is out of the question that these jobs were distributed for free; PPP’s officials do business on the jobs that are given to them,” said Rashidi, when I brought up this with her. “They might distribute a few jobs here and there for free or even on merit, but mostly the MPAs and MNAs sell these jobs to whoever can afford to buy.”

Rashidi explained how the *parchi* system is sustained by PPP and how it is eating away at the economic foundations of Larkana. “This is a mafia that has been built and encouraged by these people (PPP),” said Rashidi. “Even government teachers are hired on *sifarish* because they do legwork and paperwork for PPP during election periods; and these are the people they are after, not the ones who are capable and wish to teach,” she said. “Children taught by these teachers are then incapable of making meaningful progress in their careers and getting jobs on merit,” said Rashidi, adding about the state of education in the district that “we are at a juncture where we are producing generation after generation of incompetent students.” The issue of patronage-based appointments and how they eat away at public welfare projects featured recurrently in my conversation with the residents and this is something I will return to later in the paper.

²⁰ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Report, *Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement Survey*, 2016, Page 429.

Where Larkana Stands Today: Public Education

One of the analytical tools for measuring the vulnerability of the poor in Pakistan Human Development Report 2017 is the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which identifies multiple deprivations experienced at the same time at the household level. It quantifies deprivation over three heads; health, education and living standards. According to the report, 42% of Larkana’s population suffers from multidimensional poverty; 48.5% of the contribution in the district’s deprivation is due to education²¹.

Figure 1: Literacy Levels in the district²²

	Literacy Rate ²³	Adult Literacy Rate ²⁴ (as of 2015)
Rural	51%	46%
Urban	66%	63%
Total	58%	54%

The one silver lining I found while researching the state of public education in Larkana is that the district has managed to close or eliminate almost all non-functional schools. As many as 98% (1,143 out of 1,166) of the total schools in Larkana are functional.²⁵

However, the overall state of education in the district continues to be dire. The literacy rate is low; 51% in rural areas and 66% in urban areas (see figure 1). At the primary level, participation rates in government schools are low; only 52% of boys and 41% of girls of school-going age are enrolled in primary schools (See figure 2b). The latest figures of education, learning, retention, gender parity scores among primary and middle school children in the district, as compiled by Alif Ailan, also do not paint a rosy picture (See figure 2c).

²¹United Nations Development Program, *Pakistan Human Development Index Report 2017*, Page 34

²² Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey*, March 2016. Page 107, 114.

²³ Population 10 years of age or older that can read a newspaper and write a simple letter expressed as a percentage of the population of the district 10 years and above.

²⁴ Population 15 years of age or older that can read a newspaper and write a simple letter expressed as a percentage of the population of the district 15 years and above.

²⁵ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Sindh School Education Statistics 2015-2016*, Page 9.

Figure 2a: Larkana's Education Statistics (2014-2016)²⁶

Larkana Education Statistics	2014-2015		2015-2016		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Primary Education					
Number of primary schools	890	142	887	141	1,028
Enrolment	78,901	59,382	80,550	59,993	140,543
Primary teaching staff	3,299	1,295	3,546	1,509	5,055
Middle School Education					
Number of middle schools	46	20	45	20	65
Middle School Enrolment	5,405	4,351	4,984	4,178	9,162
Teaching Staff	256	128	268	142	410
Secondary School Education					
Number of secondary schools	48	24	50	23	73
Enrollment	44,618	26,269	45,870	26,651	72,521
Teachers	1,422	686	1,462	727	2,189
College Education					
Enrolment in Intermediate colleges	990	45	1,010	56	1,066
Number of degree colleges	4	3	4	3	7
Enrollment in degree colleges	16,153	441	17,635	537	18,172
Technical and Vocational Institutes					
No. of technical colleges & polytechnic institutes	332	--	822	--	822
No. of vocational institutes	4	7	4	7	11
Enrolment in vocational institutes	188	173	166	158	324

Figure 2b: Participation Rates in Government Schools at Primary Stage²⁷

	Boys	Girls	Total
Population²⁸	144,053	130,065	274,118
Enrollment	75,042	53,965	129,007
Participation rate²⁹	52%	41%	47%
Out of Govt. schools	48%	59%	54%

²⁶ PBS: *Development Statistics of Sindh 2017*, referencing Sindh Education Management Information System statistics.

²⁷ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Sindh School Education Statistics 2015-2016*, Page 13.

²⁸ Population of children of school-going age at primary level.

²⁹ Children enrolled in government schools out of the total primary population.

Figure 2c: Larkana District Education Rankings 2015³⁰

	Education score ³¹	Enrollment score	Learning score ³²	Retention score ³³	Gender parity score ³⁴
Primary schools	62.38	71.61	36.57	74.41	66.94
Middle schools	54.8	51.43	63.05	54.16	50.09

Figure 3a: Facilities in Schools of Larkana (as of 2015-2016)³⁶

Facility	Schools with Facility	Schools with Facility	Schools without facility (%)
Electricity	623	53.43	46.57
Washrooms	920	78.90	21.10
Drinking water	941	80.70	19.30
Boundary wall	1,055	90.48	9.52
Science lab/laboratory	31	2.66	97.34
Library	16	1.37	98.63
Playground	61	5.23	94.77
SMC ³⁵	1,132	97.08	2.92

Note: The percentages in column 2 and 3 of Figure 3a have been calculated keeping the figure of the total number of schools (primary, middle and secondary) in Larkana as of 2015-2016 as 1,166. This figure has also been confirmed with records of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.³⁷

³⁰ Alif Ailan, *Pakistan District Education Rankings 2015 Report*. Each district is given a score anywhere between 0-100 for every measure depending upon its performance, 0 being the worst and 100 the best.

³¹ To calculate the Education Score, Alif Ailan used arithmetic average of enrolment, learning, retention (survival) and gender parity scores, giving equal weight to each indicator.

³² Alif Ailan calculates the learning score for each district by taking the arithmetic average of the following variables: district literacy rates for over-10-year-olds, district average of those able to read Urdu or a regional language, English reading ability and mathematics ability.

³³ The continuation of a child's schooling. Indicators for retention scores include the completion of primary/middle schooling, continuation to the next level of education, years of schooling completed and survival rates.

³⁴ A GPS of 100 means that an equal number of girls and boys are enrolled; anything lower represents the ratio of girls fewer than boys.

³⁵ School Management Committees

³⁶ See Sindh School Education Statistics 2015-2016, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. This data has been collected by Sindh Education Management Services Department (latest available).

³⁷ See Sindh School Education Statistics 2015-2016, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. This data has been collected by Sindh Education Management Services Department (latest available).

Resources for the holistic growth of school-going children are severely short; 97% of the district's schools don't have a science lab, 98% don't have a library, 94% don't have playgrounds, 46% don't even have electricity (see figure 3a). The average number of basic facilities for schools in the district is low (see figure 3b). Although, 90% of schools have boundary walls in Larkana (see figure 3a) which is one of the highest in Sindh, the data collected by Alif Ailan found only 35.31% of primary school and 41.67% of middle school buildings to be in a satisfactory condition (see figure 3c). The gender disparity at every level of education is worrying but perhaps the most at college level where there is a dramatic rise in male to female enrollment ratio (32:1). There is also sharp fall in the educational infrastructure available for women from middle school and upwards (see figure 2a).

Percentage of School Buildings in Satisfactory conditions

Primary schools	Middle schools
35.31	41.67

Figure 3b: Overall school facilities in Larkana district³⁸

Facility	Numbers	Avg. Facility Per School
Black boards	4,403	3.78
Student chairs	5,771	4.95
Student Desks	38,889	33.35
Teacher table	4,524	3.88
Teacher chairs	11,127	9.54
Fans	8,521	7.31
Almirah	1,439	1.23
Computers	244	0.21

Figure 3c: Government School Infrastructure Scores³⁹

³⁸ The total numbers of the facilities in Larkana district for primary, middle and secondary schools are given in the Sindh School Education Statistics 2015-2016, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. This data has been collected by Sindh Education Management Services Department (latest available). The rate of facility per school has been calculated keeping in mind the total number of schools as being 1166 (breakdown of this number given in figure 2a).

³⁹ See Alif Ailan Pakistan District Education Rankings 2015 Report

I put these concerns before Khuhro; despite being in and out (mostly in) of power in Larkana since 1988, Khuhro did not have a reasonable explanation that could justify the Sindh government's inability to resolve them so far. "This issue does not pertain only to Larkana; it applies to all of Sindh," said Khuhro. "Total primary schools in Sindh are 43,000 and only about five percent are closed," he said, adding that "out of the 37,000 that remain (see footnote),⁴⁰ 20,000 are not receiving these facilities." Khuhro added here, quite vehemently, that "I will not invite criticism by only addressing the problems of Larkana and forgetting the rest of the province because my children are all over Sindh; if there is progress it should happen all over Sindh." He added that "no government should be that selfish that they only think about their own respective houses."

I find this explanation extremely problematic; PPP has been in power in the center and in Sindh (several times in both) and could have addressed these problems if they had the vision or willingness to do so. Khuhro, in his communication, displayed a pattern of evading responsibility by expanding the scale of a problem or minimizing it; anything but seeing the issue as it is. After many detours in the conversation, Khuhro mentioned that a program for the uplift of schools (all over Sindh) was begun and a budget for six billion rupees was set. "The scheme, which includes repair of Larkana's schools, has been going on for 3 years now," he said. "However, from this amount, all 20,000 schools cannot be fixed since some are in a terrible condition and need to be rebuilt entirely."

I met Muhammad Hassan Solangi, an assistant director in the Sindh Education and Literacy Department, who was able to better address some of my concerns regarding Larkana's public education. When I met him at his office, he was sitting beside a bright yellow banner announcing 'Sindh Enrollment and Retention Drive 2018'. Retention of students is as much of a problem in Larkana as is enrollment; Alif Ailan's District Education Rankings report put the retention score for primary schools at 74.41 and middle schools at 54.16 (see figure 2c). Like almost every other senior government representative I met, he too lamented the patronage system of appointments and how it has eroded the district's schools' quality of education. He also shed light on some of the issues ailing Larkana's public education.

"Measures have been taken to address gender disparity," he said. "All primary schools have now been declared genderless schools in Larkana," he added. He also acknowledged the shortage

⁴⁰ This difference translates to about 13%, and not 5% as Khuhro erroneously states

in girls' colleges but added that this situation is now improving. "A branch of Sindh University has now been established in Larkana which is a major convenience for parents who didn't want to send their girls away to Hyderabad for higher studies," he said.

Solangi explained that there was a severe shortage of job opportunities for graduates. "This is an agriculture-centric area and most jobs here are in this sector, but we still haven't been to improve this sector much," he said. He also identified the hotel management industry as a growing industry "but even in this sector, we are unable to provide training." He explained that there were no jobs even for the qualified students, due to which there is brain drain from Larkana. "Women who graduated college were mostly absorbed into the teaching profession," he said. "In one of the phases, in 2012, the seats (for government jobs) fell short because a so many qualified women were competing for them."

An officer serving in the education department, explained (on condition of anonymity) how delays in the release of funds and procurement of material was affecting the quality of public education in the district. "For instance, you might find stationary for schools reflected in Sindh government's budget," he said. "However, because it is a non-salary component, it requires a separate release from the government and that doesn't happen," he said. He added that there was a reluctance to procure material for schools because of the inquiries that might follow. "Billions of rupees have been allotted for schools, but we all are reluctant to utilize these funds due to which students are sitting on the floors," he said. "Now a high-powered procurement committee has been made, lieutenant general (Retd.) Moinuddin Haider is a part of it and IBA's VC has been made its chairman," he added. "However, even at that level there is a hesitation to procure material for fear of inquiries from NAB and other departments," he said, adding that these fears were based in precedent. "NAB has initiated enquiries when we have done procurement before; anti-corruption officials have paralyzed our officers (behaal kar diya)."

The poor quality of education in the district is something that repeatedly came up in my conversation with the district's residents and touches every aspect of their lives; from their children's future to their own employability. "There is no real system of education here and they are mostly getting by copying off one another," said mechanic Ustaad Ali (introduced earlier). "Education for children here is no more than poor company, drugs and weed," he added. "What will they do; unable to focus on their education, they befriend misguided youths and remain *darpadar khaak basar* (wandering door to door)."

Where Larkana Stands Today: Larkana’ Water Crisis

However, at this point, perhaps the most pressing concern for the Sindh government should be the issue of unavailability of clean drinking water in schools in the district. In figure 3a, SEMIS data identifies 80% of schools in the district as having access to drinking water. In my conversation with officers from the Education Works department, assistant engineer Zahid Hussain had explained that “Larkana’s ground water is sweet and hand pumps have been installed in almost all schools.” My research confirmed the district’s heavy reliance on hand pumps as a source of water (59%) but not the assertions about groundwater being drinkable.

Percentage Distribution of Larkana’s Households by Source of Drinking Water⁴¹

	Tap Water	Hand Pump	Motor Pump	Dug Well
Rural	1	68	31	0
Urban	1	48	49	1
Total	1	59	39	0

“Larkana used to be a sweet pocket, but after the 2010 – 2011 floods, the district’s water quality deteriorated,” said Dr. Ghulam Murtaza, a water technical expert from Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR). “The district’s underground water at present largely does not meet WHO standard salinity limits,” he added.

In December 2016 a lawyer, Shahab Usto, had filed a petition with the Supreme Court of Pakistan asking for the appointment of an enquiry commission to probe the water situation in Sindh, including Larkana. The commission which was headed by Sindh High Court Judge Muhammad Iqbal Kalhor, conducted an in-depth investigation with the help of the PCRWR and submitted its findings to the Supreme Court; its findings haven’t been officially challenged by the Sindh government yet. “After the inquiry commission submitted its report to the Supreme Court, a water commission was made to implement its suggestions,” said Dr. Murtaza, who had served on the commission as a member.

I got access to water sample analysis reports that were acquired from Larkana in January 2017 and July 2017 as a part of the investigation. According to the reports, 88%⁴² of Larkana city’s

⁴¹ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, March 2016, Page 385.

⁴² Also reported in Dawn. See story Faiza Ilyas, *80pc water samples in 14 districts of Sindh found unfit for human consumption: report*, Dawn, July 16, 2017.

ground water is unsafe for drinking. “However, these figures are approximately reflective of the conditions in the district,” said Dr. Murtaza. “Sewerage and infected fecal water goes into the canals which are the main source of drinking water for the district,” he said. Supreme Court’s enquiry report says that: “The PCRWR report has unambiguously revealed that underground water of Larkana has become mostly unsafe for drinking. And this fact points out to the failure of Sindh Government to supply drinking water to the people of Larkana and/or to take measures to save underground water from being polluted.⁴³”

“After the inquiry commission and water commission’s reports were presented, they (Sindh government) had claimed they were going to set an ultrafiltration plant scheme for Larkana district; but we haven’t received an update on that since,” said Dr. Murtaza.

Larkana City Water Sample Analysis Results⁴⁴

Tests	Sample size	Safe for drinking	Unsafe for drinking
January 2017 Test	33	4	29 (87.8%)
July 2017 Test	25	3	22 (88%)

I spoke to Jahanzeb Mallah, a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in Sindh Government’s Planning and Development Department, who has been overseeing development projects in Larkana for a little over a year. He explained that one of the schemes under the Annual Development Program (ADP) currently operational in Larkana aims to address the provision of clean drinking water in schools; by setting up RO plants in 8 to 10 schools in Larkana district. “The ADP scheme also includes the installation and repair of boundary walls, building foundations, toilets, as well, construction of additional rooms in schools as well as other repair work in 200 schools of Larkana,” said Mallah. “Approximately Rs. 1 billion has been allotted through this scheme for Larkana which will run for 2-3 years and target 200 schools,” he added.

⁴³ Supreme Court enquiry report, page 87

⁴⁴ Results of water sample analysis test reports, collected from Larkana for the Judicial Commission on Water constituted by Supreme Court of Pakistan

Where Larkana Stands Today: Public Development Projects

However, a few RO plants can by no means adequately resolve the greater water concerns of the district. I tried to track the amounts allotted and spent by the Sindh government in Larkana on the provision of clean drinking water and the drainage sector.

Drainage & Development

In Rehmat Bhutto’s district profile of Larkana, she says, “in 2012, the Sindh government approved a scheme estimated at Rs.1.4 billion for the overhaul of Larkana’s drainage system.”⁴⁵ Supreme Court’s Inquiry Commission Report also covers this scheme by the Sindh government for “the extension and improvement of sewerage system of Larkana city at a cost of Rs.1,406 million.”⁴⁶ The Sindh government put the responsibility for the provision of these services with the 8 Local Councils of Sindh (including Larkana) whose collective share was then increased from Rs.43 billion to Rs.60 billion.⁴⁷ The local governments set up the North Sindh Urban Services Corporation (NSUSC) to execute this task; NSUSC submitted their capital and operational expenditures in Larkana (from 2010 to 2016) to the Supreme Court as being the following:

Capital and Operational Expenses NSUSC Larkana⁴⁸

Fiscal Year	Operating Expenses	Capital Expenditure	Grand Total
2010-2011	16,313,234		
2011-2012	29,354,625		
2012-2013	51,446,019		
2013-2014	69,127,316	577,880,877.99	
2014-2015	79,394,719		
2015-2016	148,353,651		
Total	393,989,564		971,870,442

Supreme Court’s inquiry report says of the corporation’s performance that:

⁴⁵ Rehmat Bhutto, *A District in Despair*, Newline, May 2018.

⁴⁶ Supreme Court Inquiry Commission Report, February 2017, page 14.

⁴⁷ Supreme Court Report, page 16.

⁴⁸ Supreme Court Report, page 51.

“It (Larkana NSUSC) has spent Rs.393 million on operational work and Rs.360 million on capital work for this purpose, yet no tangible result in this respect was witnessed in the city. The garbage was seen either on the streets, or dumped on the banks of Rice and Dadu Canals, or being burnt openly. This position during the visit could not be denied by M.D. NSUSC. There is no dumping or landfill site in the city for management of solid waste in Larkana. One R.O plant installed by PHED at Rehmatpur Dargah Larkana is lying non-functional for the last 3 years.”⁴⁹

The report adds that:

“In respect of solid waste or the sanitation condition of the cities nothing substantial for improving quality of service in these areas was witnessed. Most of the heavy vehicles/loaders for lifting solid waste and other equipment available at NSUSC office Larkana were found out of order. The solid waste was littered on the streets; hospital waste was being burnt inside hospital or thrown in open. No municipal service was visible. Solid waste in heaps was available in front of the houses and shops. There is in fact nothing NSUSC can boast of in terms of either quality of water or better sanitation in Sukkur, New Sukkur, Rohri, Khairpur, Shikarpur, and Larkana and justify spending huge amounts of money.”⁵⁰,

I questioned Khuhro about allegations of corruption in the Larkana Drainage Scheme. He offered this explanation that transfers in the local government representatives heading drainage projects as well as increasing urbanization and population of the district were the reasons for the scheme’s failure.

I then met two senior officials from the district’s Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Assistant Engineer Ali Akbar Mehndro and Executive Engineer Khuda Bux Samtio, to get an understanding of where the funds allocated for the district’s drainage improvement were going. Samtio and Mehndro explained that PHED receives funding for larger schemes through the Sindh government and for smaller schemes, costing between 15 to 30 lakhs, through the local government. “We completed a mega scheme for Larkana last June (the 1.4 bn drainage scheme) in which we built 10 new disposal units (the points where water from sewer lines collects), rehabilitated 22 old disposal units and eliminated 27 others which used to route untreated water into rice canals,” said Mehndro. “Their water has been routed to main disposal channels and now

⁴⁹ Supreme Court Inquiry Commission Report, February 2017, page 85

⁵⁰ Supreme Court Inquiry Commission Report, February 2017, page 51

it goes to oxidation plants for further treatment,” said Mehndro. Mehndro and Samtio denied any mismanagement in the handling of funds allotted for Larkana’s drainage scheme.

Samtio, who heads Larkana’s drainage budget and has been overseeing the completion of drainage work in the district since 1996, insisted, initially, that his department hadn’t received any budget this year. Later in the conversation, he admitted that they had received a budget of Rs. 90 million for the drainage department. “The amount will be spent on disposal work at 32 locations in the district,” he said.

The open drains running through the streets of Larkana bear testament to the Sindh government’s colossal failure to address the drainage works of the district. “In the rainy season, these gutters overflow, adding to the diseases and pollution of the district,” said Rashidi, condemning the PPP for failing to improve the district’s drainage. “We were passing by Garhi Khuda Bakhsh once and the road was completely clogged; water had gathered till my knees,” she said, recalling a recent visit to the district. “They (PPP) say that Larkana is their Kaaba and their Qibla, see what they have done to their Kaaba.” She added that the reason why their (PPP’s) honor has been spared so far because there haven’t been any rains this season. “Otherwise, you would even see boats flowing in Larkana,” said Rashidi, with a pained laugh.

Roads & Development

A recurring theme in my conversation with the residents of the district, Nisar Khuhro and Mehtab Rashidi was the spending on roads in Larkana. Rehmat Bhutto wrote of Larkana’s roads: “Larkana city received a special development package of Rs. 12 billion for the development and beautification of Larkana, including the laying of new roads and drainage lines. However, the few roads that were made and the other development works done, were completed without proper planning, and with substandard materials, owing to corruption.⁵¹”

I met Larkana’s District Superintendent Engineer of the Buildings and Services Department, Abdul Qadir Khaldi. This department, which is a part of the district government, looks after the construction of the government buildings and roads in the district and answers to the deputy commissioner of Larkana. When I met him, Khaldi had served at this post for two months; before this, he had served at the same post in Sukkur for three years. However, he couldn’t recall the projects he completed in Sukkur when he was appointed there.

⁵¹ Rehmat Bhutto, *A District in Despair*, Newline, May 2018.

“The total approved cost for buildings and roads in the past two years (for Larkana) is Rs. 5,105 million, and the expenditure against that is Rs. 2,394 million,” said Khaldi, adding that several schemes were in progress and will be completed by December. In my visit to the district, I did not find the justification for the level of spending stated by the superintendent in the state of the road infrastructure. However, the engineer did not bat an eyelid over the conditions of the Larkana district’s government buildings and roads today despite the whooping amount spent allegedly on their construction and improvement. He also denied any possibility of misappropriation and mishandling of development funds allocated for Larkana. “We will achieve our goals in the district,” he told me. But he was unable to clarify what these goals were. When pressed, he asked me to consult the district commissioner on what the goals are for their department. However, later in the conversation, he affirmed that he was the highest authority on Larkana’s roads and buildings answering directly to the district commissioner.

I brought up the Larkana Development Package with Khuhro as well. “Larkana has been defamed with misleading figures of amount of money given for development,” said Khuhro. “The initial amount of this package was Rs. 10 billion; federal government had to contribute 50% and the rest had to be pitched by Sindh government,” he added. Khuhro claimed that the Sindh government invested its share but the federal government fell short of contributing its amount. “An elaborate network of roads was planned that would connect the districts and tehsils with one another,” he added. Khuhro stated that approximately “49 km of roads were built within Larkana city and many crores of rupees were spent on these, in the decade from 2008 to 2018”, safely staying away from specific numbers invested. “If you go to Larkana now, it has a somewhat different look,” he added. “All the entry roads into Larkana are spectacular.”

Upon further questioning regarding the disparity between the amounts spent and the actual conditions of the roads, Khuhro claimed the roads sector was unable to deliver “because of the rains which often cause the roads to erode. “We are not England; we cannot afford to pave the road with steel,” he said. He stressed that allegations of embezzlement were inaccurate. “A man started a petition in high court⁵² and then withdrew the petition himself; for a year or two, he disappeared and then suddenly he came and revived the petition,” said Khuhro, stressing that no one was

⁵² See story ‘Correspondent, *SHC restores petition relating to embezzlement of Larkana Development funds*, Express Tribune, Feb 1, 2018.

punished by court and everyone is innocent till proven guilty. Khuhro was visibly enraged when I added here that the petitioner had stated that he had withdrawn his plea due to threats to his life.

The collapse of these mega schemes, the Larkana Drainage Scheme and Larkana Development Scheme, prove the monumental failure of the PPP to deliver in the district in the public development sector. The district lacks basic public amenities that make an area worth living. “No work has been done over here that would have brought about a visible change in the lives of the residents,” said a local zamindar (landowner) Saddam Hussain who had lived in Larkana all his life. “We don’t want to step out because the dust and pollution has only increased over time.”

He also added that there was a severe shortage of entertainment avenues. “If we want to take a break from the daily mill, we have no choice but to go out of the city,” said Hussain. While researching the development projects earmarked for this district, I found several projects that have been pending for years, such as this bus and taxi station which has been pending for years such as this one for the upgrade of Mohenjo Daro.

Scheme	Date of approval	Target completion date	Estimated cost (Rs in mns)	Actual expenditure (till June’16)	Revised allocation (2016-17)	Estimated expenditure till June’17	Throwfor ward on 01-07-2017	Allocation for 2017-18	Financial progress till June’17	Financial progress till June’18
Mohenjo daro ⁵³	19.10.12	June 19	285.429	64.191	37.847	102.038	183.391	63.00	36	58

Upon my visit, I found that even the Larkana airport had not been operational since two months. Rashidi’s words, that simply naming projects after yourself cannot change the fate of a district echoed in my thoughts and in every interview I had with the district’s residents. But their full irony manifested itself when I came across several projects that have been pending for years and have been carried forward several times over, such as these two parks for instance.

⁵³ Protection, Preservation Promotion and Development of World Heritage Site of Mohenjo-Daro.

⁵⁴ Sindh Health Department, Annual Development Program, *Larkana Local Government and HTP Report 2017-18*.

Larkana Local Government Projects under ADP ⁵⁴ (Rs. in millions)

Scheme's Name	Date of approval	Target completion	Estimated cost	Actual expenditure (till June'16)	Revised allocation (2016-17)	Estimated expenditure till June'17	Throwforward on 01-07-2017	Allocation for 2017-18	Financial progress till June'17	Financial progress till June'18
Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Park	21.02.13	June 19	114.998	8.00	23.234	30.234	84.764	140.00	26	48
Bakhtawar People's Park (Mohenjodaro)	01.06.12	June 19	641.155	10.00	7.577	17.577	623.578	140.00	3	25

Where Larkana Stands Today: Public Health

The rising incidence of HIV cases from Larkana made headlines with as many as 157 cases confirmed by Sindh's AIDS Control Program Head Dr. Sikandar Memon, as of May 6th, 2019. “A Joint Investigation team of police officials and members of health department has been formed that is probing the reasons for the sudden rise in cases,” said Dr. Memon. I also spoke to the Provincial Chief of Integrated Health Services, Dr. Younus Chachar, who confirmed that Larkana continues to top the list of districts most affected by HIV in Sindh with the number of AIDS patients in Larkana (division) rising to more than 2,200. He also explained why this number continues to rise.

“The main reason for the increasing incidence of this disease is the transfusion of infected blood,” said Chachar. “Some patients, such as those suffering from thalassemia, need blood regularly; they usually go to mushroom labs [blood banks and labs run by quacks],” he explained. “A severe shortage of registered blood banks has only made the problem worse,” he said, adding that he had shut down several unregistered blood banks recently. He explained that one possible reason for the rising incidence of the disease in children was that young boys need to regularly get their heads shaved and this was sometimes done with infected blades. “However, the biggest reason for the enduring crises in the health sector in Larkana was political interference,” he said. “The people we train are removed and ministers appoint their own people,” he added.

In my visit to the district, I found the people to be deeply dissatisfied with the shortage of government funded health facilities and mismanagement of the institutions running there; they were also deeply concerned about the impact of this on their children’s health. “Pollution levels and

insects have increased at such a rapid pace that our children are becoming prey to horrendous diseases, particularly skin rashes and malaria,” said Ustaaad Muhammad Ali, a mechanic who lived with his family in Larkana city. According to PBS data, of the 24 districts in Sindh, Larkana ranked

13 (1 being the best and 24 being the worst in ranking) in full immunization coverage of youth between the ages of 12 and 23 months⁵⁵.

Percentage of children aged 12-23 months that have been fully immunized⁵⁶ based on recall and records⁵⁷

	Male	Female	Total
Rural	63%	69%	67%
Urban	80%	81%	80%

There are four government run hospitals in Larkana district, in addition to several BHUs and clinics. However, in my interviews with the people of the district, the one health institution they all agreed to be meaningfully serving the people was the casualty ward of Chandka Medical Hospital (CMCH).

Government Health Facilities in Larkana⁵⁸

Year	Hospitals	R.H.Cs	Dispensaries	T.B Clinics	M.C.Hs	BHUs
2016	4	5	27	8	0	28

The largest medical institution in all of northern Sindh, CMCH was initially set up as a college in 1974, during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's premiership. According to the medical superintendents working there, it has recently been upgraded to a 1700-bed hospital. Upon my visit to the hospital, I found it to be severely understaffed and incapable of catering to even a portion of the thousands of patients who visit for treatment; not just from Larkana city but from the entire district. The hospital is facing problems due to disruptions in electricity supply,

⁵⁵Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement Survey, 2016.

⁵⁶Note that full immunization here means the child has received: 'BCG', DPT1, DPT2, DPT3, polio1, polio2, polio3 and Measles.

⁵⁷ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement Survey, 2016, Page 172

⁵⁸ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Development Statistics of Sindh 2017*, Page 306-307.

mismanagement of funds, poor hygiene standards as well as political interference in appointments. Two senior staff members of CMCH spoke to me about the current state of the hospital.

“The department that gets the most patients on a daily basis is the casualty ward; approximately 1,500 patients every day,” said Additional Medical Superintendent (AMS) Dr. Habib Rahim Soomro. “In a single shift, we get as many as 700 people but we only have four dispensers to see to them,” AMS Dr. Ali Morio added. They explained that the ward is fitted with 70 beds and treats patients almost free of cost. Among its other patients, the casualty ward also receives patients with head injuries who need to get MRI and CT scans before they can be treated. But both machines have been out of order for almost a year now. Patients suffering from head injuries had to pay to get these tests done at other facilities before they can be treated at CMCH. “The 5-year guarantee period of our CT scan machine has expired,” said Dr. Soomro, adding that it now hangs up midway while functioning. “We have been told that the cost of its maintenance is 1.5 crore; we had a meeting with the health secretary in which it was decided that a new CT scan machine will be bought for Larkana,” said Dr. Soomro. “It’s been a year since that meeting.”

Medical Personnel (Government) Appointed in Larkana District⁵⁹

Year	Doctors	Dispensers	X-ray Technicians	Lab Technicians	O.T Technicians	Midwives
2015	285	69	17	8	18	55
2016	295	71	17	8	18	55

The AMIs explained the severity of the staff shortage – in particular, technicians, nurses, sanitation – at CMCH. “We don’t even have ventilator technicians because of which the machines are lying there, unused,” said Dr. Soomro, adding that they had complained to the officials in the government’s health department about this but nothing had as yet been done. “We haven’t had a paramedic appointed over here in the past 5 years,” said Dr Morio. “Even the doctors who were appointed at CMCH for a year during their studies were transferred out by the government after their postgraduation which is why we benefit much from their expertise.” The shortage of staff at CMCH has been an enduring problem since at least a decade (see Dawn story from July 2007).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, *Development Statistics of Sindh 2017*, Page 310-314.

⁶⁰ M.B. Kalhoro, *CMC Faces Shortage of Staff*, Dawn, July 17 2007.

In response to my query about the claims of political interference in the appointments at CMCH, the three medical superintendents looked at each other and smiled. “That is 100 percent the case; but there is no doubt or shame about it since the entire system works that way,” said Dr. Morio.

I tried to explore how much funding is allotted by the Sindh government for operational and development costs for Larkana’s health institutions, including CMCH, as well as the amounts disbursed under the Annual Development Program. The state of public health institutions in Larkana stands in sharp contrast to the amounts budgeted for them under Sindh government’s health services budget.

Sindh Government Health Services Budget (2018-2019)⁶¹

Scheme Name	Budget Estimates (2017-2018)	Budget Estimates (2018-2019)
Chandka Medical College Hospital Larkana	1808,261,000	2090,387,000
Basic & Rural Health Centres of Larkana	278,017,000	280,045,000
Anti-Malaria program Larkana	21,282,000	21,598,000
Drug Control Larkana	7,087,000	6,592,000
Taluka Hospital Ratodero Larkana	49,349,000	43,073,000
Taluka Hospital Dokri Larkana	47,364,000	47,510,000

There are also massive delays in release of funds by Sindh government for health development ventures in the district with the funding for some facility upgrades being carried forward by more than 5 years after the date of approval.

⁶¹ Government of Sindh, Finance Department, Health Services Budget 2018-2019.

⁶² Establishment of Cardiac Surgery Complex having facilities of: i. Coronary Angiography Cardiac Catheterized Lab. ii. Cardiac Bypass Surgery iii. Chest Surgery at CMCH

CMCH upgrade ⁶³	02.03.12	June 19	178.530	52.302	10.627	62.929	115.601	50.00	35	63
CMCH upgrade ⁶⁴	03.10.16	June 19	200.00	0	0	0	200.00	50	0	25
CMCH upgrade ⁶⁵	18.08.16	June 19	250.00	0	0	0	250.00	62.50	0	25
Renovation & rehabilitation of paramedical institute	23.01.12	June 19	67.733	45.105	0	45.105	22.628	5.00	67	74
RHC upgrade ⁶⁶	18.02.15	June 18	133.402	118.528	12.203	130.731	2.671	2.671	98	100
CMC upgrade ⁶⁷	03.03.15	June 20	1111.21	232.105	190.00	422.105	689.106	350.00	38	69

The true cost of the Sindh government’s failure to provide key healthcare services is paid by the district’s lower income residents. A laborer, Altaf Hussain Chandio, explained the conditions of the government run health facilities. “The dispensaries don’t have electricity, water or even medicines if you go at night,” said Chandio, adding ruefully that the medical staff [as they are government appointed] get regular salaries so the day-to-day business of the hospital doesn’t come to a halt. “If a patient has to be operated upon, we can afford the cost of getting a family member treated only if we sell our cows or lands,” mechanic Ustaad Ali. “Low standards of living are pushing the children into taking up drugs which have worsened their health conditions,” he added, while condemning the PPP for making cosmetic upgrades rather than delivering properly functioning institutions that address the health concerns of the district. “They [the PPP] claim to be true to the people of Larkana, but they will be true to us only when they come here and reside here among us and let the flies and termites feed upon their children like they do ours.”

What the future holds for Larkana

I find Larkana’s future to be bleak; from a developmental, political and administrative standpoint.

I asked Khuhro where he saw the district’s development over the next decade and his response was ridiculous, even by his standards. “Development is never complete; if it were than America

⁶³ Establishment of 50 bedded Medical & Surgical ICU and expansion of Casualty & OPD Department at CMC Hospital

⁶⁴ Construction of staff nursing hostel, new operation theatre & strengthening of trauma center at CMCH

⁶⁵ Renovation & rehabilitation of residences, internal roads, water supply, drainage and Peads Medicine/Surgery Block at CMCH Larkana.

⁶⁶ Providing additional facilities in Rural Health Center at Naudero, Larkana.

⁶⁷ Renovation & rehabilitation of Chandka Medical College and Construction of New Noori Girls Hostel of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University.

and London would not be still building roads and buildings,” said Khuhro, adding that “sky is the limit (for Larkana’s development).” However, even he acknowledged that putting an end to basic poverty in the district should be the goal for the immediate future.

In a piece for the Time Magazine, Aryn Baker wrote of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh that:

“Bhutto's mausoleum is testimony more to his daughter's ambition than to his own self-image — before he was hanged, he had requested nothing more than a humble marble slab like those on the graves of his ancestors in the family plot. But, conscious of the power of image in Pakistani politics, Benazir opted instead for the 130-foot onion dome. Impressive as its facade may be, however, it conceals a shabby interior of chipped marble floors and peeling concrete pillars.⁶⁸ I find these lines to be a very apt summary of how PPP, after Zulfiqar, frittered away its mandate in Larkana. Instead of planned, structural progress meant to uplift the district, PPP’s halfhearted developmental projects in Larkana have been token gestures aimed at keeping them voters on the hook.

From a political standpoint, the district is struggling to disengage from its Bhutto identity; the people of Larkana are trapped in their loyalty to PPP and some of it is by choice. The streets of Larkana are dotted with posters of the Bhutto family, more than perhaps any other city in Sindh. From Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s speeches to his horses and luxurious lifestyle, the Bhutto family is enshrined in Larkana as everything associated with immense power and patronage – untouchable, unquestionable, majestic. There is no other homegrown alternative party that holds even a fraction of the same clout.

The Benazir Income Support Program, through which the poor families receive a nominal amount every month, also serves as powerful hook. “A few thousands do nothing for a woman who has a household to run, it brings no *tabdeeli* (change) in her life,” said Rashidi. “But in election periods, they (PPP’s district representatives) call the women of the district and remind them that if you don’t vote for us, these 3000 rupees will be stopped,” said Rashidi. “The people feel intimidated; its free money, it’s nice no matter how meagre.” A major issue raised by the residents of the district was that PPP’s representatives do not play fair in elections. “PPP’s men monopolize this district and don’t let anyone else compete without beating them up; we have no choice but to vote for them,” said mechanic Ustaad Ali. Rashidi concurred with this assessment. “I challenge them to win by fair means,” she said. “I stood for elections from Larkana city and for three days,

⁶⁸ Aryn Baker, In the Bhutto Heartland, Time Magazine, Oct 2, 2007.

they didn't release my results," she added. "The entire system of administration in Larkana is in PPP's hands; they raise their own people to stand as independents against us to cut our votes," she said. "Their men go around distributing cash, solar panels and motor cycles on election days for votes and the people are sold."

From an administrative viewpoint, malaise has set in, due to decades of mismanagement, political interference in appointments and an abject lack of faith in the ability of government institutions to deliver. "Project tenders are given to favorites instead of being awarded on merit," said Rashidi. "This is why projects routinely fail and have to be rebuilt." Jahanzaib Mallah from the Monitoring and Evaluation department also raised the same concern. "Only 50% of the work being done here is quality work; political interference is a key issue contributing factor in this," said Mallah adding that there were problems with capability as well as capacity. "Contractors who are given tenders are not hired on the basis of quality work," he said. Mallah added that some fault also lay with the Sindh government. "They distribute funding all at once at the end of the fiscal year in June (when project targets due) instead of releasing funding periodically during the year so that schemes can develop over the allotted time period."⁶⁹

In my opinion, corruption, incompetence and the poor quality of Sindh local government projects in Larkana are symptoms; the main problem is the absence of digital systems and processes through which government funds can be securely disbursed for projects and monitored. There needs to be a concerted effort by the Sindh government to install technological tools that can help ensure transparency and accountability in local government projects (particularly in procurement processes) and periodically track whether they are accurately utilizing their budgets and targets.

The true cost of PPP's failures in Larkana is borne by the children of Larkana, who you would see running next to their train in Caravan-e-Bhutto's promotional videos. At one point in our conversation, Rashidi said that "abject poverty is what we have given our children who are our future and now they think this is their *taqdeer* (destiny)." This is the last thought I leave you with.

⁶⁹ I tallied this with Sindh Government's ADP data and it bears out.

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