

LSO Initiatives

Ayun and Valleys Development Programme, Chitral



Vol. 1 - Issue. 17

An update on the work of Local Support Organisations

Preservation and Promotion of Indigenous Culture

Out of 24,804 people living in the LSO area, 3,872 (16%) belong to Kalash community. Kalash are an Indo-Aryan Dardic indigenous people residing in three valleys of Chitral. They are considered unique among the peoples of Pakistan, because of their different religious and cultural heritage. They are also considered to be Pakistan's smallest religious community. They speak a unique language and maintain their own separate cultural traditions. However, due to various socio-economic reasons, they are facing difficulties in preserving their culture. Therefore, the LSO has been trying to preserve and promote their culture.

The LSO submitted a proposal titled as "Kalash Language and Culture Preservation Project (KLCP)" to Small Grants and Ambassador Fund (SGAF) USAID. SGAF approved Rs.7,775,170 while the LSO contributed Rs. 550,000 to the project. The project aimed at: 1) Development of Orthography of Kalash language, 2) Documentation of Kalash proverbs, folk tales and folk songs, 3) Development and printing of three books on Kalash language in Kalash script, and, 4) Development of Community Linguists for preservation and revival of the unique culture.

The KLCP project proved very effective in achieving its objectives. A key feature of the project was to involve the local community in the development process through different ways and means. The project engaged the community in culture and literacy

Date of Formation: 04 June, 2005			
District: Chitral		Union Council: Ayun	
Total Households in Union Council: 3,488	Organised Households: 2,753	Coverage: 79%	
No. of Village Organisations (VOs): 125 41 women's	No. of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): 33	No. of General Body Members: 148 34 women	No. of Executive Committee Members: 13 4 women

What are LSOs?

LSOs or Local Support Organisations are central to the 'Social Mobilisation' approach of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs). In a bid to reduce poverty and empower marginalised people (especially women), the RSPs mobilise rural communities into a three-tiered structure, which consists of Community Organisations (COs)- neighbourhood level community groups, Village Organisations (VOs) - village level federations of COs, and LSOs - union council level federations of VOs. LSOs are able to carry out community-led development at a much greater level due to the advantage they gain from numbers. As the tertiary tier, LSOs are also uniquely able to develop linkages with government and non-government organisations, donor agencies and the private sector.



committee, and also conducted a five-day orthography workshop and an eight-day writers' workshop. A large number of community members and other influential personalities attended the project opening and closing ceremonies. Six Community Linguists and two project staff were trained on language documentation in a two-weeks residential training by Forum for Language Initiative (FLI) Islamabad. Kalasha culture was highlighted in different ways through print and online media. A group of Kalasha elders visited Gilgit-Baltistan to see how people there have preserved their cultural heritage. A two-day Kalasha language, artisans at work exhibition and seminar was held at Lok Visra Islamabad, where the community members briefed government officials, diplomats and general public about Kalasha language and culture.

The community linguists were divided into two groups and assigned the task of collecting data from Kalasha Qazis (Religious leaders). After consultation with Kalasha literacy and culture committee, the six community linguists were deployed in three valleys where they collected information, in line with the guidelines set by the committee.

As a result, around 175 proverbs were collected by community linguists from the three Kalasha valleys; 100 plus proverbs have been published and translated into Urdu; 22 folk tales have been recorded and preserved in written form in Romanized Kalasha script; over 80 folk songs were collected and digitally written on CDs, and; four writers workshop were conducted in the three valleys.

Initially, there were 22 Roman Alphabets of Kalasha language, including 17 consonants and 5 vowels. After the project intervention, the number of alphabets increased to 51, including special characters, 31 consonant and 20 short and long vowels. More than 100 people were trained in Kalasha alphabets. Most importantly, 9 people were trained as community linguists to carry on the cultural preservation and development task on a sustainable basis.

Rehabilitation of Flood Damaged Rural Infrastructures

Unpredictable and extreme weather patterns are causing devastating calamities in the high valleys of Chitral area. Heavy rains and consequent flash floods in 2013 and 2015 brought devastation and destruction of unprecedented nature in union council Ayun, including the three Kalasha Valleys. The UC suffered damages to public and private properties, communication and irrigation infrastructure which paralyzed the day-to-day life of the people living in the upper valleys. Floods severely affected irrigation channels and in many places, directly affected farmlands and standing crops. Water Mills, Electricity and Drinking Water Supply schemes damages created alarming situation in the upper valleys.

During both floods, the LSO leaders were the first to come forward to help the affected families. They made emergency arrangements of food, clothing and medicines and gave hope and confidence to the affected people. In a joint meeting with the government administration, when the Deputy Commissioner

(DC) said that due to lack of funds at his disposal he cannot start relief work, the LSO provided Rs. 280,000 on loan to him out of their endowment fund. The DC refunded the amount to the LSO later when he received funds from government. Moreover, the LSO leaders approached the government and donor agencies and accessed funds for reconstruction of damaged roads, bridges, irrigation channels and water supply projects.

The LSO rehabilitated two flood affected bridges and three irrigation channels with the financial support of Concern Worldwide. A total of 955 families benefited from the two bridges while 128 families benefited from the rehabilitation of three flood damaged irrigation channels.



Jaw Kuru Birir Bridge before rehabilitation



Jaw Kuru Birir Bridge after rehabilitation

The two rehabilitated bridges are vital because they connect Rumboor and Birir valleys, where the Kalahsa live, to Ayun and Chitral town, where facilities for health, education, trade and access to government and legal services are located. The rehabilitation of the three irrigation channels provided immediate relief to the small farmers as they are now capable to cultivate their land to ensure their livelihoods and food security.

The LSO also rehabilitated 10 Water Supply projects in 10 villages of the UC and provided clean water for drinking, cooking and hygiene from improved water sources to 1,599 families with financial support from the same donor. Moreover, 128 health and hygiene awareness sessions were conducted to the beneficiary families. As a result of these projects, clean drinking water has now been provided and sanitation conditions have improved. More to it, the practice of appropriate hygiene behaviours is expected to have improved among a vast majority of the community members who attended the hygiene sessions.



"This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

Reported by: Muhammad Ali Azizi
 Edited By: Noor Muhammad
 Designed & Printed by: Masha ALLAH Printers

THE LSO INITIATIVES SERIES IS BY THE
 RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES NETWORK

