



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 VO. 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.

Establishment of Women's Market

Women and girls still face unacceptable levels of discrimination in the society, which prevents them from playing an effective role in the decision-making processes. This is especially true for women who have not been to schools. The work done by less skilled women are generally taboos, while the functions performed by the more educated, skilled, women are looked up to in awe, generally. For instance, there's less acceptance for a woman opening a shop, or working as a carpenter, compared to a woman teaching at a school, or working at a bank, or hospital. This practice leads to creation of a class-based society, in which there's more space for the educated, who are often well off, compared to those who are left behind. To challenge this, the Chatorkhand LSO, with the technical and financial support of AKRSP, created a women's market in 2006. The purpose of the initiative was to promote entrepreneurship for local women, especially those who have not been to school, or left after studying a few classes.

The LSO, initially, identified women who were interested in starting their own businesses. They were then provided with training on how to start, run, and manage a business in an organised manner. Emphasis was laid on record keeping and estimating profit and loss. Shops were rented at one location for women entrepreneurs and the rents for the first six months were paid by AKRSP. Today 25 women entrepreneurs are successfully running their businesses in the market. Common Interest Groups (CIGs) have been formed, and each CIG meets on monthly

Date of Formation: 02 February, 2007			
District: Ghizer		Union Council: Chatorkhand	
Total Households in Union Council: 1,495	Organised Households: 1,474	Coverage: 99%	
No. of Village Organisations (VOs): 34 18 women's	No. of other Civil Society Organisations 12	No. of General Body Members: 64 34 women's	No. of Executive Committee Members: 13 5 women's



basis to discuss and solve issues, support each other and pool collective savings. A micro loaning programme was started with an initial fund of Rs. 38,000, which has now grown to Rs. 114,000. Micro loans are given to member women to meet their working capital needs. The initiative is so successful that more and more women now want to start their businesses in the market. However, due to lack of shops, they are unable to start for now. It is hoped that investors will soon construct more shops around the women's market allowing them to expand their businesses.

Establishment of Orchards in Collaboration with Government Agriculture Department

Though the area produces fruits like apple, apricot and grapes in large quantities, these are local varieties having very limited shelf life. Transporting fresh fruits to the markets, therefore, is a challenge. Moreover, the local farmers lack horticulture skills; there is no concept of tree management, giving fertilizer to the trees and protecting fruits from pest attacks using modern methods. Therefore, farmers do not reap the benefits of their fruit produce. There is a huge potential for producing jam, jellies and pickles using the cheap local fruits and sell them at prime prices in Gilgit and down country markets, but due to lack of required food technology expertise tons of fruit pulp are wasted annually.

The LSO, therefore, collaborated with the Govt. Agriculture Department to introduce modern orchards for the first time in the area. Interested families having 4 Kanals of land, with boundary wall, were selected by LSO for the initiative. The Agriculture Department supplied them with improved variety fruit plants and also trained them in soil preparation, planting trees, pruning grown up trees, making and using organic matters, like green manure and green pesticides, and picking and packaging the ripe



fruits. So far, 36 farmers have established modern orchards and are earning good profit annually. They seek technical help from Agriculture Department on need basis.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Department has trained 90 women in producing jam and jelly using pulps of local fruits. Around 45 of the trained women produce jam and jelly at their homes and sell in the market, besides consuming these health products at their homes.

Managing Disaster Risk

Recent scientific opinion is that global climate change is happening and will present practical challenges to local ecosystems. Analysts are projecting an increase in the magnitude of climate change with altitude in terms of both temperature and variation in precipitation. Gilgit and Baltistan are practically facing the adverse effects of climate change on regular basis. The magnitude of disasters was unprecedented in 2010 and 2014 when heavy rains caused flash flood, mud slides and erosion of river banks in Ghizer and its adjacent valleys. Hundreds of houses, cattle sheds, boundary walls and river embankments, irrigation channels, bridges and roads were damaged. Domestic animals, standing crops, fruit and forest trees were washed away. Hundreds of families became homeless.



The LSO leaders organized relief activities, including evacuation of people at risk to safe places, establishment of shelters and provision of food and medical care for the displaced families. They also arranged funds from various donors for rehabilitation of damaged houses, irrigation channels, bridges, roads and protective walls at river sides. Moreover, the LSO managed to construct more protective walls at riskier river sides.

The LSO has now 90 men and women trained in disaster management by FOCUS Pakistan, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network. These trained men and women are organized in Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Village Emergency Response Teams (VERTs). These teams respond quickly and in a professional manner whenever a disaster takes place. For example, during the 2014 flood the team members watched the water flow in the rivers day and night for ten days, strengthened the protective walls and shifted people and domestic animals at risk to safer places, on time. The teams used blankets to put off a fire that erupted in a precious juniper forest, saving it from complete annihilation.



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