



Rural Support Programmes Network

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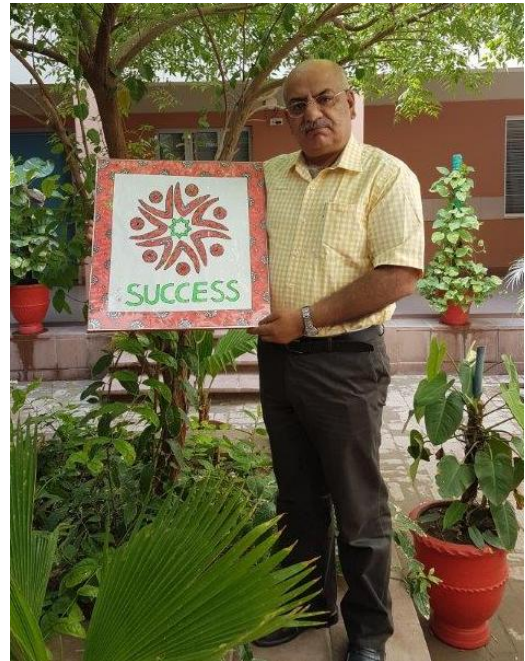
Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay, COO RSPN

Visit to Tando Muhammad Khan and Jamshoro Districts to Conduct the Programme Introduction Community Sessions under SUCCESS Programme

On the morning of Saturday, June 04, 2016, Mr. Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay, Chief Operating Officer (COO) RSPN, visited the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) in Hyderabad and met with their SUCCESS Programme implementation teams.

Key Points:

- In these meetings, COO emphasised on the importance of maintaining the quality of planning, implementation, record keeping, monitoring and compliance.
- COO concluded that the SUCCESS Programme is essentially about facilitating NRSP and TRDP — as well as Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) — to undertake their *core mission* that is to mobilise and economically empower the rural poor through fostering a network of people's own institutions: Community Organisation (CO), Village Organisation (VO), and Local Support Organisation (LSO). Another key objective under the SUCCESS Programme is to capacitate these institutions and support them to develop linkages with government service delivery departments and organisations.
- COO underlined that it was NRSP that first introduced and piloted the poverty scorecard (PSC) which is now recognised as being an essential for identifying the poor and various sub-categories of the poor. He said that RSPs in Sindh have designed the SUCCESS Programme in such a manner that there are various economic and livelihoods enhancing interventions for different sub-categories of the poor. In order to improve targeting, it is essential to conduct PSC in a comprehensive manner to ensure full coverage of all rural households.



- PSC will be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes as well, e.g. to monitor that all households in the 0-23 PSC category have been mobilised and that over 70 percent of all households have been mobilised, and to show how many households, over the SUCCESS Programme period, have improved their poverty status. Therefore, PSC becomes very strategic.
- NRSP and TRDP teams assured COO that PSC will be conducted in a proper manner. NRSP is also providing technical support to TRDP and SRSO in the rollout of PSC.

After the meeting, COO travelled to Tando Muhammad Khan district for Programme Introduction (PI) in one of the target localities. This was followed by PI in one locality of Jamshoro district.

Programme Introduction:

At both locations, dozens of community members, mainly women as key target population, attended the SUCCESS Programme Introduction (PI) sessions. PI sessions began with the Social Mobilisers introducing COO and District Team members, followed by an invitation to COO to speak to the gathering. COO followed a similar approach at both locations. He began by thanking the community women and men for taking out time to participate in PIs. Coming from a rural background himself, COO said, he is well aware of the fact that community women and men remain busy with various productive and household level activities. And by taking out time for PI sessions clearly shows that there is a keen interest to hear about new opportunities and changing their existing condition.



This itself is a very positive sign and bodes well for the future. Plus, this presence of tens of community women, clearly indicates that COO's field colleagues work in a transparent manner, and that there are no 'secret' meetings in someone's room, *hujra*, *baihak* or *otaq*. With everything being discussed in an open community meeting means that everyone gets an opportunity to hear the message and to ask for any clarification.

COO told the gathering that he is in the community along with colleagues from local RSP. He said that there are hundreds of departments of the federal government, provincial government and local government set up to deal with all sort of problems and issues. Then COO asked the community members to name some of the government departments; in response to which many departments were named including Agriculture, Livestock, NADRA, BISP, Education, PWD, Union Council, Passport, WAPDA, BHU, etc. COO told them that despite hundreds of government departments, millions of government employees and billions of budgetary support, poverty continues to persist.



He informed them that within the government structure there are two pillars: The **Administrative Pillar** (from the President at the top to the Patwari at the bottom) and the **Political Pillar** (from Parliament in Islamabad to local Union Councils). He then highlighted the fact that everyone accepts that there is high poverty in the country — from provinces to communities. But actual poverty is at the household level; only a mother knows when her children are hungry, out of school, ill, and without shoes.

So, if poverty is at the household level then actions have to be taken at the household level. However, despite doing great deal of work, all these hundreds of government departments do not, and cannot, reach out to the household level where actual poverty exists and is being experienced 24 hours a day.



It was in this context that Dr Akhter Hameed Khan, Pakistan’s greatest developed thinker and practitioner, argued that since the government’s Administrative and Political Pillars, and departments cannot reach the household level; there is a need to build the third pillar: The Social (ijtema’ae) Pillar of people’s own institutions. And this Social Pillar can only be built by independent support organisations like RSPs. After the success of the first RSP in Gilgit, where 1,000,000 people were mobilised, COO underlined, the government realised the very importance of reaching down to the household level and to mobilise the rural poor people into their own institutions. And, COO said, since the government cannot itself do this, the government supported the setting up of RSPs in all provinces of Pakistan and continued to support them to create the Social Pillar. Once the Social Pillar is built, it can then start to interact with Administrative and Political Pillars to complement and supplement them to reach out not only to the community level but also to the household level. There are now many examples of people’s Social Pillar working with government Pillars in various parts of the country including in Shikarpur and Kashmore districts of Sindh. RSPs are working with the support of the government, as well as to supplement and complement the government.

COO stressed that since poverty is at the household level, therefore, the focus of RSPs’ work is also at the household level. RSPs are there to support the household.

Upon a question from a male participant about load shedding and how it was hindering their agricultural activities and daily lives, COO thoroughly explained them that the RSPs focus on the household level and on matters that household members can do to change their lives. He said that it was the domain of the government to resolve the energy crises at national level. He continued to enlighten them that there are many problems and then there are government departments to

deal with those problems. These problems are to be addressed by the Administrative and Political Pillars.

Afterward, COO inquired from the participants whether all household have some minimal resources. Participants mentioned that some have small ruminants or a share in cattle/buffalos, knitting/stitching skills, etc. “A woman mentioned that she has nothing except her teenaged son.”

COO motivated them by saying that all poor households have some resources. These can be small piece of land, some livestock, some skills, family members, or some small savings. Since all households are different, each household will have different set of small resources. A family may have very young children; another family may have old children. One family may have only daughters; another family may have only sons. Even if they have nothing, each person has two hands. And then each person has God-given ability to think and find out ways to change his life. And this is the best resource.



COO later asked the gathering if there was a potential to slightly improve the management of the resources of the poor households? To which the response was positive. Women mentioned several potentials including but not limited to training for stitching and knitting, vocational training for young boys, herding more goats, and running small village shops. COO emphasised that when there are some resources, there is always a potential to improve their management so that more benefits can be obtained from those limited resources. A male participant termed the huge number of unemployment as the major problem. Responding which COO said that if one poor household has unemployed female or male member, then perhaps the household can do something. COO again used this example to underscore the focus of RSPs on the households.

The gathered community women and men agreed upon a single point of having some resources, and that their management can be improved. COO then asked the next question, “Do you want to improve your household income as well as the lives of your household members?” Some women said yes: of course they all want to see improvements in their lives. COO repeated the question and asked them to raise their hands if they wanted to see improvements in their household’s status. Upon this all women raised their hands. COO asked if the community has honest and committed women who have a keen interest in welfare of the community. The response was positive and that there are several such women.

COO reiterated that thus far, all present have agreed on the following points: 1) all poor households have some mix of resources; 2) management of whatever limited resources can be improved; 3) all households desire to see improvements in their living conditions; and 4) there are honest and committed women in the community. Now, COO said, in order to take necessary actions, all those present have to enter into a partnership with RSP. As in any partnership, the two partners have their respective roles and responsibilities which have to be taken very seriously and fulfilled completely otherwise the partnership fails to achieve the desired objectives. Then COO asked the participants if they are willing to enter into a partnership with the RSP, and if yes, they should raise their hands. There was a unanimous response and desire to enter into partnership with RSP. COO said that as under the terms of partnership (TOP), both the partners have some responsibilities.

The households' responsibility includes:

- Households get together and foster a Community Organisation (CO). All household to become members of the general body of CO
- All households in the 0-23 PSC category must be members; others can be members
- Households, in a general meeting of all members, select one CO President and one CO Manager
- Newly set up CO must hold regular meetings
- At these meetings CO members must save some amount of money; actual amount can vary from member to member depending on their capacity to save
- CO meetings must be recorded
- Record of CO savings must be maintained
- CO members to participate in various RSP supported activities

RSPs' responsibilities include:

- Providing support during the process of CO formation
- Provision of registers and other documents to the new CO
- Arranging training for CO leaders
- Sharing PSC data with CO for future reference and use

The TOP will be signed by each member household and CO leaders and by RSP staff. One copy will be given to CO and one copy to the RSP.

At that moment, COO again asked the gathering if they were willing to enter into a partnership with RSP. Again the response was overwhelmingly positive.



COO said that he has mentioned that RSPs' focus is on the poor household since poverty exists there, and the people suffering from poverty live there. Therefore, RSPs will support the poor household. However, if a Union Council has 3,500 households, a single Social Mobiliser cannot reach out to all households. Similarly, RSPs management cannot personally interact with every single poor household of the country.

COO said that there are millions of poor households. In Pakistan, RSPs have reached out to over 6 million rural households. And it became possible when people's own institutions were fostered. It is only through the people's own institutions that RSPs reach out to poor rural households. "Once you set up the Community Organisation, then RSPs can reach out to the households and support them," he underlined. Hence the importance of CO meetings with presence of all members is crucial to bring positive change in the lives of poor household. If meetings are regular, RSPs will have regular contact with households. If meetings stop, RSPs cannot reach out to households. "So the secret to the ability of RSPs to reach out to millions of poor households lies not with RSPs but with the poor people themselves." They have to **organise** themselves and build a **capital** base through savings and to improve their managerial and technical **skills**. This OCS approach of Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan is based on the global experience of past 200 years. And Mr Shoab Sultan Khan has used it in many parts of Pakistan

and India. Now, with the support of Government of Sindh and European Union, this will be used in Tando Muhammad Khan and Jamshoro, COO remarked.

He said that once the CO is fostered, with all households being members, then one important activity that RSPs will undertake with CO is to prepare the Micro Investment Plan (MIP) for each and every member household. COO reiterated the RSPs believe that the potential for improvement lies with the household. And the community members have themselves confirmed that there is potential to improve the management of existing resources. In order to analyse each household and then to identify their potential for improvement, MIP is prepared. Since it was agreed that all households are different from each other in terms of access and control over resources, and they are also likely to have different potentials, therefore it is very important that household level MIP is prepared. Since MIP is prepared with the household, they have the responsibility to make optimal use of it. This is the highest form of active participation; households set their own development agenda. CO and RSPs then facilitate taking forward this agenda of the household.

At both settlements/*goths*, some women and men raised issues about education and health. COO replied that as mentioned several times earlier that the focus of RSPs is at the household level. To support the household, COs are fostered. COs' key role is to support the households in attending CO meetings and undertaking MIP. Once a village has many COs, then as part of the process of the fostering the Social Pillar of people's own institutions, they will get together to foster a Village Organisation (VO). Each CO will have two representatives in VO. Once VO is in place, then VO will prepare a Village Development Plan (VDP) which will identify the village resources, potentials for improvement and prioritised needs. VDP will include those activities that one household cannot undertake but the whole community can undertake jointly, i.e. supra-household activities. At that time, areas of village education, health, sanitation and many others can be identified. "But that is down the road, he said adding, immediate focus should be on the household and CO.

COO again reiterated that the Government of Pakistan and the Sindh Government have set up RSPs and are supporting them to reach out to poor rural households, to mobilise them in to COs, prepare MIPs for each household and support the implementation of MIPs for improvement at the household level. The use of PSC is very important. In five years' time, the PSC result should be much higher for all households, especially those who now fall in the 0-23 PSC category. Households and COs are the foundation of the process of fostering the Social Pillar to complement and supplement government Pillars. If the foundation is strong, then VOs can be built on this foundation for undertaking other important work to support the households to improve their condition. RSPs' niche, focus and speciality is the household and to support them for economic and social empowerment through their own institutions.



At the end, COO thanked the community women and men, RSPs' Social Mobilisation teams, District and Regional Managers for allowing an opportunity to visit Tando Muhammad Khan and Jamshoro. COO concluded by saying that he has seen the keen interest of community women, and feels that they have a huge potential to harness their own energies and ideas to support the enhanced welfare of their own families. With the active support of rural women, RSPs will be better positioned to support them through their own Community Organisations.
