



Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme



Showcase of SUCCESS Programme at The Heritage Fest-Mela Yaaraan



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**Showcase of SUCCESS Programme at
The Heritage Fest-Mela Yaaraan**

Women Empowerment: The road to Success

February 17-19, 2017

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Organised by

RSPN

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OVERVIEW

As part of RSPN-SUCCESS Component, one of the activities is to showcase SUCCESS Programme at cultural events. These events provide an excellent opportunity for visibility and presenting of the work undertaken by the rural communities of Sindh under the programme. In this regard, RSPN participated in a cultural event, The Heritage Fest-Mela Yaaran held from 17th to 19th February, 2017, in Islamabad. The three-day event showcased artifacts, handicrafts and food stalls from all over the nation, including Sindh Rural Support Organisation's (SRSO) Sartyoon Sang.

To bridge the gap of capacity building of artisans and creating linkages for market access, SRSO has established its outlet named as "Sartyoon Sang". It is a fair trade organization dedicated to improve the lives of disadvantaged artisans by promoting their skills and crafts. Reaching out to basket weavers; rhilli workers; embroidery craftswomen; weavers, potters; jewelry makers and more, Sartyoon Sang has a reach out into more than 10,000 women artisans. The objective of the organisation is to build the capacity of the craft-persons, promote product development and develop marketing strategies by forming business development groups of skilled artisans.

In addition to the stall, RSPN also organized a seminar titled "Women Empowerment: The road to Success" on third day of the festival. Mr. Jean Francois Cautain, European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan, was the Chief Guest, his wife Ms. Sonia Cautain, and RSPN's chairman Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan also attended the seminar, among others.

A panel of experts and practitioners including Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, MNA Nafeesa Khattak, Ms. Rina Saeed Khan, Professor Farkhanda Aurangzeb, Hajra and Shahida, artisans from SRSO Sukkur, and Ms. Neelum Turu shared their views on various aspects of women empowerment, and made valuable recommendations for improving the social and economic status of rural women in Pakistan.

PROCEEDINGS

The seminar titled “Women Empowerment: The road to Success” held on 19th February, 2017 highlighted various aspects of women-empowerment, including the role of community-driven development (CDD), social organization, legal empowerment, and the impact of climate change and food insecurity on women empowerment.

The seminar commenced with a short video documentary that focused on telling “Mehnaz’s Story”. Mehnaz, a CO member from Shikarpur district, narrates how social mobilisation has contributed to economically empower her and her community. The documentary truly depicted the impact of the RSPs’ work at the household and community levels. This was followed by opening remarks by Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chariman RSPN.



While sharing his six-decades-long experience of working for development of rural communities, Mr. Khan emphasized on the importance of people organizing and coming together to solve their own problems and fight poverty. He stressed that human beings have an innate potential that needs to be unleashed to create awareness, enhance capabilities, increase incomes, and enable empowerment.

He said that money attracts money, and savings are extremely important if one wants to improve their situation. Mr. Khan displayed several examples of what women have been able to achieve by organizing themselves and overcoming several socio-economic constraints from Gilgit Baltistan to Andhra Pradesh in India. “We work with the assumption that even the poorest man or woman has the potential to come out of poverty; our role is just to help them unleash this potential. Currently, we are working on a programme in Sindh, which works exclusively with women with the help of the European Union. We have the will and the methodology; we just need the political support to keep moving forward”, said Mr. Khan.

The Chief Guest, Ambassador of the EU, Mr Jean Francois Cautain conveyed his appreciation and reinforced the support of the EU to empowering women all over Pakistan, particularly while collaborating with RSPN.



“My wife and I recently visited Sindh and witnessed the SUCCESS Programme which is only focusing on empowering rural women by the RSPs. I have to say that we were immensely impressed with what the programme has already achieved in only six months of its inception”, he said.

The European Union’s Ambassador to Pakistan further added, “We saw women in rural Sindh literally transform their lives and heard them speak about what they have achieved by taking their development in their own hands. I have

seen women in Sindh rally and advocate to their local government officials as a collective force and fight for their rights. If you want a sustainable world, men and women have to work together to progress.”

REMARKS BY PANELISTS

Award winning journalist, Ms. Rina Saeed Khan, made a presentation about the impact of climate change on rural women. Speaking about the adversities caused by climate change, Rina addressed food security issues, floods, displacement and the severity with which Pakistan is affected by climate change. She said that women can play a very important role in ensuring food security, because most of the food around the world is grown by women. She said that Pakistan can secure its future by including women in the labor force, and by promoting small scale food production enterprises.

MNA Nafisa Khattak spoke about the work she is doing for women empowerment. She said that it is all in the hands of people and community members to get what they want. She said that local level institutions can play an important role in empowerment of women.

The seminar also hosted Hajra, an artisan from Sartyoon Sang, who is also a member of Arbab Mir Baher Community Organisation, Sukkur. Hajra shared her life’s story and said that her life has changed since the formation of a community organization at the muhallah level. She said that their links to markets have improved and now the women are earning much more than what they used to earn earlier. She also added that SRSO has played an important role in her transformation by not only training her, but also giving her opportunities for exploring and accessing markets.



Professor Farkhanda Aurangzeb, Manager Legislative Watchgroup, Aurat Foundation, spoke about legal empowerment of women and different laws introduced to ensure protection of women’s rights. She said that while formulation of laws is important, it is equally important to spread awareness about the legislations, and to train the law enforcers about the legislatures. She said that bureaucrats and lawmakers are not aware of the details of laws formatted for women’s rights. She said that even people in the judiciary at times did not completely understand the laws.

Ms. Neelum Turu, a political activist from KPK, Chairperson of Women Commission KPK, discussed the beginning of the women’s rights movement at the global level. She said that the tradition notion of women being lesser than men has changed, and now more space is there for women to start working equal to women.

CONCLUSION

The seminar ended with screening of a documentary about the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme, implemented by RSPN, SRSO, TRDP and NRSP, in collaboration with the government of Sindh, with financial support of the European Union.



SUCCESS Programme is based on the Rural Support Programmes' (RSPs) social mobilisation approach to Community-Driven Development (CDD). Social Mobilisation centers around the belief that poor people have an innate potential to help themselves; that they can better manage their limited resources if they organise and are provided technical and financial support. The RSPs under the SUCCESS Programme provide social guidance, as well as technical and financial assistance to the rural poor in Sindh.

SUCCESS is a six-year long (2015-2021) programme funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), and Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) in eight districts of Sindh, namely: Kambar Shahdadkot, Larkana, Dadu, Jamshoro, Matiari, Sujawal, Tando Allahyar, and Tando Muhammad Khan.



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