



EUROPEAN UNION



ECHES

K A M B A R S H A H D A D K O T

2018



www.rspn.org
www.success.org.pk
www.facebook.com/successprogramme
www.twitter.com/SUCCESSinSindh
www.instagram.com/SUCCESSinSindh/

Stories by:

Amna Shoaib, Young Development Professional, SUCCESS, RSPN
Reena Ibadat, Young Development Professional, SUCCESS, RSPN

Project Managed by:

Zara Jamil, Documentation and Reporting Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN

Reviewed by:

Fazal Ali Khan, Programme Manager, SUCCESS, RSPN

Contributors:

Abdul Mannan Chachar, Documentation and Communication Officer, SUCCESS, SRSO
SRSO SUCCESS Team

Designing and Printing:

Abdul Qadir, Masha ALLAH Printers, Islamabad

All pictures used in this publication are the property of SUCCESS and its partners.

© 2018 Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN). All Rights Reserved. Licensed to the European Union under conditions.



EUROPEAN UNION

“This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.”

More information about European Union is available on:

Web: eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan_en

Facebook: European Union in Pakistan

Twitter: EUPakistan

ECHES



K A M B A R S H A H D A D K O T

2018



THE ECHOES OF SUCCESS

In 2018, as the European Union funded Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) programme nears its three-year mark, the project is already halfway through. When it began in 2015, the RSPs associated with it, National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), conducted an incredibly comprehensive Poverty Scorecard Survey to gauge the level of poverty, financial standing, and needs of potential beneficiaries.

Three years later, the SUCCESS team has conducted multiple activities to not only track the progress of the programme but also document the stories of beneficiaries from the field. This series of success stories titled 'The Echoes of SUCCESS' is a compilation of human interest stories which narrates the experiences of the beneficiaries and the implementing team regarding various interventions under SUCCESS in each district.

The SUCCESS documentation team at RSPN, in collaboration with the associated RSPs, have tried to talk to beneficiaries and their families to glean first-hand accounts of the changes SUCCESS has brought to these communities. These stories, more than any reductive method that measures only financial condition, allows a glimpse into the lived experience of women empowerment in the target areas of SUCCESS. In this regard, they are imperative to learn what empowerment in this context may look like and what processes precede it. These lessons will prove to be vital as SUCCESS forges its path ahead and prepares to wrap up later in communities that will soon learn to sustain themselves.

Preface

Development projects have often been critiqued for adhering to a rather superficial model of empowerment. Critics allege that, by only giving sporadic financial aid to impoverished communities, development projects create a system of dependence. Moreover, development models do little to engage with the systems of oppression, e.g. patriarchy or repressive land ownership, which lie at the root of poverty.

SUCCESS, as a project, did not set out to liberate people from these structures. Instead, SUCCESS has worked with the belief that beneficiaries of the programme themselves, once they have had an adequate opportunity to realise their potentials, can work best to negotiate with structures that disempower them. However, it must be kept in mind that by centring one of the most vulnerable groups in the country, i.e. women from disadvantaged communities, SUCCESS was already threatening the entrenched systems of oppression that have fed off the disempowerment of these groups. As SUCCESS nears the halfway point, the life stories of the beneficiaries as they recounted them to us, help the team at SUCCESS carve out newer, context-specific definitions of empowerment.

The SUCCESS documentation team at RSPN, in collaboration with SRSO, interviewed beneficiaries for book one of the 'ECHOES' series which covers District Kambar Shahdadkot - managed by SRSO under SUCCESS Programme. In most cases, the interviewers felt that empowerment took the form of negotiation, and not outright rebellion. Most women we talked to had been forbidden by men in their house from going out or partaking in any SUCCESS activity that may help them assert their presence in the neighbourhood. These women had to learn to bargain their freedom. A group of women who banded together to install hand pumps in their village confessed that they were not allowed by their husbands to set foot outside their home. The husbands only relented when a respectable man from the village presented the case of these women to their husbands. In this case, what had worked for these women was the inclusion of an ally,

who used his privilege and visibility to further women's cause. In other situations, women had to sneak out of their households to partake in CO meetings. This particular observation confirmed what literature on this topic has already found. In the more "mundane", daily forms of empowerment, women negotiate with the patriarchy instead of threatening it outright. However, there were some interesting exceptions to this rule. In the case of Iffat Batool, a VO chairperson from Thebba whom the local wadera tried to bully into silence when she rallied for schools and hospitals. When Iffat refused to cow down, she was kicked out of the house her family had inhabited for generations. The wadera had wished to isolate Iffat and her family. Instead, when Iffat left, fifty other families, at the insistence of their female members, followed her out of the village. This was an important step: this was the first time that people had collectively stood up to the wadera. Although, social mobilisation had not begun with the explicit purpose of rattling the repressive feudal system it had helped the women organise themselves and counter a system that, for generations, had thrived on their disempowerment.

It is important also to note that SUCCESS has a much more rounded definition of empowerment. It has focused not just on external empowerment through the grant of loans and skills etc., but also on an internal empowerment which is tethered to the conviction people have in their own ideas. Shoaib Sultan Khan, the founder of RSPN, has repeatedly emphasised that poor people have the potential to "help themselves". This becomes all the more apparent in the SUCCESS stories that have emerged, of women who have braved patriarchy and a baffling bureaucracy to achieve their goals.

As a program, SUCCESS has never explicitly set out to engineer any changes to the local social landscape. The changes that we have witnessed in the case studies were actually beyond the scope of SUCCESS. However, it is the process of social mobilisation, of awakening a collective consciousness in people, which set the process in motion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SOCIAL **EMPOWERMENT** OF WOMEN



Community Organisation (CO)	03
Village Organisation (VO)	07
Local Support Organisation (LSO)	10

WOMEN **LEADERSHIP**



Trainings	17
Community Resource Persons (CRPs)	22

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN



Community Investment Fund (CIF)	26
Technical and Vocational Skills Training (TVST)	31
Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI)	35
Micro-Health Insurance (MHI)	40



LEGAL EMPOWERMENT



Community Awareness + Toolkit (CAT) Sessions	47
Joint Development Committees (JDCs)	52



PEOPLE BEHIND SUCCESS



Social Organiser	59
Social Organiser	62





A group of women, many wearing headscarves, are walking along a dirt path in a rural, hilly area. The scene is overlaid with a blue tint. The text "SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN" is prominently displayed in white, bold, sans-serif font across the upper middle of the image. The women are dressed in traditional attire, and the path leads through a landscape of trees and brush.

SOCIAL **EMPOWERMENT** OF WOMEN



It may be argued that every person in the world has one lingering regret. For Zamiran, a young woman from Nao Goth, the regret is that her life has been rendered “incomplete”. As the conversation meanders, it seems to come back to the same sentence: “My life is incomplete now,” Zamiran laments.

Zamiran, as she reflects on her past, remembers a young girl who wanted to be educated more than anything in the world. She hoped to be a doctor or a teacher one day. In her clan of six brothers and three sisters, Zamiran was the youngest. This might explain why, even though education was forbidden for her elder sister, her brothers were a lot laxer towards her, encouraging their two youngest sisters to get an education. When Zamiran passed her Matric exam, her brother went as far as to make her Domicile ready

and helped her get a job. However, their commendable nature could not get them through. The family was struggling financially and when Zamiran received a proposal from a man who, as Zamiran relates, was completely not-literate, her family decided to marry her off.

Zamiran was whisked away to a new home and a set of new, less kind human beings populated her life. Soon after the marriage, Zamiran had two daughters. This did not please her in-laws. Her mother-in-law resented having a daughter-in-law who had a degree, and the means to a better life. Zamiran used to plead with her to spare her degree, vowing to devote herself to housework for the rest of her life. This did little to placate her mother-in-law who, in a fit of rage, set fire to all her degrees. Not even a shred of paper could be salvaged. In that fire, Zamiran convinced

herself that her hopes of having a better life ever had burned to ashes. Assured that his wife now had no way to ever construct a better life on her own, he abandoned her and their children. Her eyes welled up with tears as she talks of those difficult times.

"I could not do anything afterwards, my life was incomplete," she says as she wipes her tears with the hem of her kameez (shirt).

Zamiran had left her father's house with a degree and a will to dream, she had returned with all of it squandered. She would sit for hours, murmuring that her life was now incomplete. Her mother would console her, saying that better days lied ahead. One day, with a team from SRSO came to their village. Zamiran who, by her own admission, had rarely ventured out of home, seized this opportunity to do something with her life. Her brother protested.

"I asked him if my going out to work would make him happy. He said no," Zamiran reminisces. "I said, "Well, it will make my mother happy"."

Even as she set out to change her life, life did not immediately ease for her. A day before her Community Organisation (CO) training was to begin, her nephew fell ill and had to be rushed to a nearby government hospital. The staff at the hospital responded with a kind of inconsideration that many have come to associate with government employees. He demanded Rs. 50 from the family to let them enter the premises. Someone else demanded more money to conduct X-rays. In their anxiety, the family may have acquiesced but Zamiran was firmly against it. Her time with SRSO had taught her that it was not only acceptable, but imperative, to make demands of the government.

"I chided him, I told him that government hospitals are built for poor folk like us. We should be treated free of cost," Zamiran recalls.

In the end, Zamiran was able to have three children treated, free of cost, at the hospital.

These were small victories, but Zamiran's gaze remained firmly on education.

“My life will no longer be incomplete”

Perhaps due to her own longing for education, Zamiran decided that all children in her village should go to schools. That, alarmingly, was not the case back then. Parents told her that there was no teacher in the government school. The teacher in question responded by saying that he had not been paid in months. Zamiran promised to arrange his payments if he came to school regularly. Here again, Zamiran put her training with SRSO to good use, by establishing contacts within the government to bring the payment to the teacher.

However, the villagers' woes regarding education were far from over. Many of them realised that their children could not keep up with the school curriculum and needed a little nudge in the right direction. Tuitions, due to their hefty costs, were unimaginable. Here too, Zamiran's help carried them through. She gave free

tuitions at her house every day. She had always hoped to become a teacher. Now, Zamiran could catch a glimpse of her ideal reality, a reality she seemed to have lost touch with after her marriage.

All that Zamiran did was for her community. However, she realises that she cannot fend for her people unless she nurtures her ambitions. Unaccompanied, she headed to Larkana and had all her documents made anew. She has enrolled herself in Intermediate, the qualification succeeding Matric. Zamiran is finally working to rid herself of her lasting regret, soon her life will no longer be “incomplete”.



In our culture, men are hailed as the breadwinner, the decision-makers, and the voice of reason. Women are supposed to nod passively to everything men tell them to do. However, in Goth Chutto Joyo, a small settlement leading off from Kambar Shahdadhkot, women seemed to have flipped the script. Here, men admit, albeit with a sheepish grin, that they have followed the footsteps of their women.

The women of the Village Organisation (VO) of Chutto Joyo sat in a circle in the room they have declared an office. It is a humble room, with none of the trappings that define an office in the city. Instead of chairs and tables, rillis, Sindhi quilts cover the unpaved floor. There are no desks, but files and other paraphernalia are stacked neatly in a corner. There may not be a day care centre, but children of the VO members saunter in and out,

and cling to their mothers.

It was not always so easy. When SRSO first came to the village around two years ago, it was quite a task for the women of Chutto Joyo to even attend sessions with SRSO. When they talked in their home about forming a Community Organisation (CO) or getting Community Management Skills Training (CMST), the men would snigger. Some of them would even pass snide remarks, wondering what these illiterate women could do to change things around the village. In the end, it took a man for the men to pay heed. The women of the village enlisted the help of Faqeer Muhammad, one of the few men who had completed his schooling, to convince their men. Men realised that saving money did not breach any code of conduct they had and, although begrudgingly, allowed their women to form COs.

The social mobilisation process in Chutto Joyo went from strength to strength. Soon, four COs were formed and then, a VO for the village was formed. The VO begun to save and later, when Faqeer Muhammad needed a loan to start a small shop, they were more than eager to help their old ally. When the VO met and decided to lay down a Village Development Plan (VDP), they recognised the installation of hand pumps as the most urgent need of their community. Like many other villages, Chutto Joyo often does not receive a steady stream of water. Whatever water does trickle into the village is contaminated and unfit for use. The women worked with SRSO to install hand pumps and remedy an old problem of the village.

The men, who had gotten used to dismissing their women, were left feeling astonished and a tad bit embarrassed. Now that the women had managed to solve a problem without needing their help, they felt obligated to also accomplish something for the village. They had observed the way the women had learned to navigate the bureaucratic machinery while they worked with SRSO. The men decided to put the lessons to good use.

After discussion, they decided that the road network leading to the village needed their immediate attention. The roads leading to Chutto Joyo crumble to dirt tracks as they near the village. It is consequently tough for vehicles and people to travel. When it rains, the dirt tracks swell with water. The mucky water effectively cuts Chutto Joyo off from the rest of the world at a time when they are most vulnerable.

The men formed a group and went to see the District Commissioner (DC). The DC seemed eager to meet the villagers and listen to their concern. However, getting his office to actually pay heed to their recommendations, the villagers soon found, was the real challenge. It took the villagers eight months of regular visits to the DC office for him to sign the orders that would set into motion the construction of the road. The construction of the road has now finally begun.

The process of social mobilisation has electrified a previously stagnant community. The villagers are ambitious about their collective future. They hope to extend the road network into the village to construct an easy path to the schools. As

men talk about roads, women have their own ideas.

“We need to have a girls' school in this village,” a woman chimes in.

When asked what work they will do to achieve these goals, the villagers are excited about exploring their options. Someone says that they hope to apply for a Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) grant for the roads and the school. But that is not the only option they are considering. The villagers are willing to lobby with the government to work on the development in their neighbourhood.

The people of Chutto Joyo have realised that it takes grit and a spirit that refuses to be defeated to attain the basic amenities of life. And, they have witnessed the model of social mobilisation work out for them, and are willing to put in the hard work.



Local Support Organisation (LSO)

Bulandi

When Afroz's father died in 2016, she was left shattered and traumatised, unwilling to leave the house and mingle with other women of her village Noor Muhammad Supro. Her sister-in-law tried her level best to bring Afroz out of the melancholy but failed repeatedly. When Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) came to their village, Afroz's family tried to convince her to join their meetings so that she could get herself out of the helpless state. "I would run and hide from them", shared Afroz, when the team of SRSO came for the visit. Her family compelled her to join the Tanzeem (Community Organisation) and listen to what SRSO had to say and from there on her journey started from being a member of a CO in her village to being the treasurer and Community Resource Person (CRP) of the Local Support Organisation -





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

گونن جي تنظيمن جي سرگ ڪارڪنن جو ورڪشاپ

شعبو: اڪوٽي
تاريخ: 15 مارچ 2017



LSO “Bulandi”, which the women have formed at the Union Council level now.

Afroz and LSO “Bulandi” went from strength to strength. “Being a woman who wouldn’t even go the village nearby, was now travelling to Sukkur”, rejoiced Afroz, as she began telling her drive of bringing positive changes in the village through LSO “Bulandi”. It is really fascinating and inspiring to witness that a woman once in a futile state was now helping other women to live a decent life of their own. She completed her Community Skills Management Training (CMST) and Leadership Management Skills Training (LMST) in Sukkur and began to work as a Community Resource Person (CRP) in her Union Council (UC). Her CO became a part of a Village Organisation (VO) and the Local Support Organisation (LSO) and she became the representative of her CO in both the Community Institutions (CIs). She put her training to good use and the bulk of knowledge she gained from the trainings. Now, knowing the effect of trees on the environment, Afroz mobilised her community and has planted around 600 to 700 trees in her village and particularly near her village stream, she adds. Further

boasting about how LSO “Bulandi” is not only benefiting the women of the area, Afroz also revealed that they have also planted trees where the men of her village sit and gather around at evenings, the same men who used to oppose the idea of women getting out of their homes, narrated Afroz in a puckish sense of humour.

Fixing one problem after another, LSO “Bulandi” under the supervision of Afroz, would swiftly move on to the next. The LSO added another milestone of making new CNIC’s by driving a campaign across its UC, as the women in her village did not have CNICs. Most of the time, their family did not bother taking them to a National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) office, says Afroz, as it would cost them the travel fare, which the people could not afford, and besides, they did not consider it worthy enough to put in the effort of traveling. This meant that an alarmingly large portion of the population could not vote, travel abroad, and most importantly had no legal identity of their own. Afroz, who had obtained NADRA’s number from SRSO, knew that it was foremost a crucial task which needs to be

completed before anything else. During her trainings, she was taught to deal with such issues and even learnt how to contact the concerned authorities. She made a call to NADRA office, told them about the prevailing situation, and affirmed that the LSO could easily gather around 100 women who wanted to make their CNICs, hence further suggesting that they should pay a visit to the village soon. "They were reluctant at first", continues Afroz "they feared that there would be less number (of people) so the people should rather come to them" but Afroz reaffirmed and compelled the NADRA office bearers to send their van. Astonishingly, when the NADRA van arrived, more than 600 CNICs from her UC were registered, which included around 300 cards from her own village. The turnout was more than expected. Even women as old as 40 and above years of age made their first ever CNICs and the young girls who were given no heed previously now show their CNIC's victoriously, all thanks to LSO "Bulandi", acclaimed Afroz. "I cannot tell how happy I was, the van stayed till 12 am in the morning," declared Afroz as she beamed with pleasure.

LSO "Bulandi" has still many improvements to make and is in touch with the government authorities too. Setting eyes on to the sky, in Union Council Development Plan (UCDP), they have proposed to plant around 2,000 more trees within a year or so. Simultaneously, the LSO also further plans to focus on education. Enrolling more and more girls of the villages to their nearby schools is their set target too. The LSO has already started the drive by enrolling 30 girls in a school, in Ghari Razamand, claims Afroz. When asked to give more details about the LSO's future ventures, we could sense the excitement in her tone but Afroz could only say, "It will be wonderful, you will see" leaving us yearning to know more.



A photograph of a man in a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt, gesturing with his right hand. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text 'WOMEN LEADERSHIP' is prominently displayed in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper left quadrant.

WOMEN LEADERSHIP



Afroz's brother was furious. It had been 11 months since their father, a government employee, passed away. Since then, the brother had religiously visited government offices, pleading with them to make an account in his mother's name so that she could continue to receive her husband's pension. The government officials had responded with a continuous disinterest. They referred him to different departments, until he found himself in the tangles of the bureaucratic red tape. One day, he came home and announced that his family should abandon all hope of getting the account opened and receiving the pension.

Afroz, who lived with her family in her father's house, begged her brother to allow her to try. He merely scoffed. Afroz recalled his disdainful remarks. "If I had not been able to navigate the bureaucratic

machinery, how will you, an illiterate mother of two, do so? Sure, you have been spending time with some organisation, but how does that qualify you to accomplish something real?"

Despite not trusting her abilities, Afroz's brother still allowed her to go and test her luck. Afroz was a shy and reluctant girl since childhood. She further went into her cocoon of solitude when her father passed away in 2016; her life had crumbled. She had been his favourite child, and he had loved to indulge his youngest daughter. After her father's death, her family had feared she would collapse completely. Around that time, activists from an organisation called SRSO had come to their village. Her sister-in-law urged the painfully shy Afroz to attend their sessions just so she got out of the house, into fresh air, and to meet other

women. But, Afroz did not have a good opinion of women who set foot outside their house, and rarely ventured outside herself. If any stranger did try to talk to her, she would just “scurry away”, she recalls now.

The SRSO people were different. They told her that they only required the women in the village to come together and work, and Afroz was won over by their logical message of self-help. Initially, not many women in the village were eager about the project. It was then that the reticent Afroz took initiative.

“Adi (sister) Havva and I went from one house to another, convincing the women to form a Community Organisation (CO).”

In the end, the women did listen to them. The CO was formed. Even as she threw herself into community work, Afroz knew that there were problems at home that needed to be solved. One day, she told her mother to accompany her to the bank. This was a brave move for a girl who admitted to not knowing what a bank is. With a confidence that had bloomed after her work with EU funded SUCCESS programme staff of SRSO, Afroz

approached a man who turned out to be the manager of the bank.

“I told him that my children and I were starving. I told him that I will not budge from this seat until he sorts out the account thing. I told him that my family wanted to have a good Eid this time”, she recalls.

The man scrambled from one room to another, while Afroz remained unmoved in the waiting area. He told her that her father's department had been changed. She let him know that it was his job to fix it as he was the educated one and not her, so she was not going to move. As the evening approached, he came to congratulate her.

“I immediately called my brother,” she said with a proud smile. “He first did not believe what I was saying, thought I was out of my mind to claim I had done something in a day what he could not do in many months. He was over the moon.”

Even as she talked to us as a confident woman, Afroz seemed keenly aware of what she perceived as a “lack” in her. She confessed that she had not had an education. As the conversation progressed,

she let slip that she believes that she cannot talk “with propriety” since she did not have an education. It seemed odd coming from a woman who had mobilised a hesitant community. It seemed that remarks made frivolously by her brother and community about the disparity between her education and ambition had stung, and stayed.

Afroz now wants to remedy this “lack” and has her eyes set on to the sky. Time and again, she talks wistfully of what could have been if she had been educated.

“You can't tell that I am an illiterate woman, right?” Afroz asks, her eyes glimmering. “Imagine how much better I would have been if I could go to school.”

Unsurprisingly, the cause closest to her is education. With a touch of longing in her voice, Afroz said that she could not get an education, but she says with a resolve as strong as her character, “My three daughters will, I will make sure of that.”



“People ask me what I get in return for all the efforts I make and I always tell them that nothing compares to the satisfaction I get afterwards”. Before getting affiliated with Village Organisation, Samreen was home bound after her intermediate. She narrated drifting into her thought, “I felt illiterate, since I used to sit at home all day. But when I became the Community Resource Person (CRP) of my area, I started to keep records of my Village Organisation (VO). It gave me a kind of encouragement. I think I may have shed a few tears while holding the pen, it was then that I knew I was educated and that I can change things.”

Samreen is a tough spirited girl who has defied all the obstacles, broken social restraints, and improved the disintegrated state of her village. She had resolved a community clash with her

indomitable spirit, determination, perseverance, and self-confidence, she was no doubt meant to accomplish something substantial, deserving all the praise and recognition one can give her. Being a Community Response Person (CRP) and manager of her Village Organisation (VO) Gathar, named after her village, Samreen is an active young female despite living in a parochial area. She is a charming lady who handles major challenges, and it is girls like her who are real life iron ladies.

The tribal clash in Village Gathar started years ago when an argument broke out between some people of Buledi and Burdlay caste, leading to blood shed from both the sides. After that episode, all the acquaintances between the two groups were abandoned, and even the children were informed never



to visit the other caste. The situation was so bad afterwards that even for Eid namaz they would call the police to be on standby, just in case any disruptions occurred between the two groups. Samreen knew that it was a lose-lose situation for both the parties and no good was going to come out of it but only feuds and hostile situations.

As the SRSO trainings were about to start, the question of how to bring together the women of both these tribes was a challenge, as the two groups stood strong on their grounds, disinclined to compromise or even bear each other's presence. At first, it felt quite alarming to Samreen that her village people were willing to let go of an opportunity that could totally transform their lives. She further cautiously exerted that, "Good opportunities do not knock again and again." She profoundly exclaimed that if European Union (EU) is so concerned about their lives than they should also be concerned about it. Fully aware of the grim situation, Samreen kept trying to knock some sense into the women that rather than crying about the past, they should instead work together to solve the

prevalent issues. Samreen, refusing to succumb, hoped that things will change for better, so letting go of the opportunity to work with SRSO was out of question.

She was lucky that her family was understanding enough to support her. Despite people trying to tarnish her reputation, her elder brother remarked, "I support her because she makes me feel proud and happy. She is doing a great job and whenever anything goes wrong (in the village), you will surely find Samreen there trying to resolve the situation". Seeing him talk about her sister so proudly was pure joy. But being a daughter of one of the leaders of the village Panchayat, she often used to hear some ruthless remarks as well. The people would bad mouth her father for keeping a loose hand on her while preaching others to keep a look out for their daughters. Samreen's father and mother knew her very well but the people never stopped talking behind her back, constantly firing insulting remarks, but none of this brought down her motivation level. Her father's saying, "Girls cannot be and should not be caged" kept her going with more determination.

Fortunately, with the help of her father's friend who was a Buledi (They both remained friends amidst the feuds), Samreen and the social mobilisation team of SRSO were able to convince some women to be a part of Community Awareness Toolkit session. It was not easy, Samreen recalls, "I told them that being an unmarried girl if I can come to their home to meet them, without fear of any kind, then why cannot they? I am like a daughter to some of you, I said, some of you are like sisters to me." After visiting their homes, Samreen had already persuaded half of the women by gaining their trust as they nodded their heads in agreement and promised to end this feud.

Things changed for better, and the women of both the tribes attended the Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) session. Each caste now payed frequent visits to each other's home, be it a funeral or a wedding, they equally share the pain and happiness of each other. With her dazzling eyes sparkling with joy, Samreen continued, "Now we are one and we all are really happy about it" and they never turned around after that.

Samreen surely seems to be enjoying her prominent position among the villagers now, "The whole town knows me" she revealed, "People even come to my mother saying that they know who her daughter is." She proudly also mentioned an anecdote where a needy Buledi woman came to her asking for help. Taking it as a challenge in order to set a positive example as well, Samreen promised the woman to help her in every capacity possible. After deep scrutiny, Samreen decided to ask the 12 tanzeems of her village to submit PKR 1000 each. Samreen did not want to disappoint the Buledi woman and the Tanzeems were kind enough to listen to her and followed the orders by pooling an amount of PKR 12,000 for the woman. The woman admired Samreen's kind gesture and promised to return the money as soon as she could. Setting an unbiased reputation, "Now the women of Buledi call me either sister or daughter and often praise me as well." Blushing, she continued, "They often admire how beautiful I looked on certain days."



A photograph of a doorway with a patterned rug and a decorative hanging, overlaid with a green tint and white text. The text is centered and reads "ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN".

ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT
OF WOMEN

Irshad's life story is the testament of - 'fighting back'. A widow in her 60's with six children to take care of and no source of income what so ever. She has two sons, but unfortunately rather than being pillars of strength for Irshad, they are not even strong enough to look after themselves let alone provide for their mother. The eldest son is disabled due to an unfortunate accident where he mistakenly opened fire on his own leg while the other son is visually impaired and as the night falls, his eyesight becomes weaker. Her daughters on the other hand are all married and living with their respective families.

It was not a smooth ride for Irshad, being a single parent with no sources of income at her disposal, she was poverty stricken for sure. A problem that cannot be understood by mere turning of pages of

numerous books on the topic. Imagine being so helpless that the whole family sits down and considers committing suicide as the final way out of their misery. Irshad begins story of her life struggles with what she did before getting help from EU funded SUCCESS programme in the form of CIF amounting to PKR 10,000. To make ends meet, she used to bring ice from a town about two kilometres away from her village Bakhsho Sario, on a donkey-cart and sold it back to earn a minor amount. "The ends would barely meet", she lamented. "The scorching heat would make the situation even worse, as some of the ice would melt away during the two hours travel back to home."

Going down memory lane, she also explained how her family was doing just fine, as her eldest son used to drive machinery in the fields and



earned a handsome amount of money. However, things got gloomy as soon as he lost his leg. She called people for help, as she did not have the resources to get her son's leg treated. She took him to Karachi, with whatever she could manage to get in donation, but his leg could not be treated, and tragically, it lost function. Both her sons' conditions took a huge toll on her mental and physical health, as being a single mother of differently-abled children she started to work alone in the fields day and night.

A score of 15 on her poverty score card (PSC) is a testament of her deprived state. With all that has happened to her sons, the long run of bad luck did not seem to stop. However, as soon as she found out about EU funded SUCCESS programme and their interventions through her Community Organisation (CO) Sujaag, Irshad, without any second thought, applied for the Community Investment Fund (CIF). Initially, she wanted to raise livestock or a single goat but after some thinking, she opted to go with a Pakora (local snack) stall. As she could have gone with any other option, Irshad justified that she needed an instant source of income at this critical phase, and

a Pakora shop seemed to be the best option for her at the moment, shrugging off all the other ideas.

It has only been a month since they opened the shop and besides selling only Pakora's, she has also kept some snacks to attract more customers. She buys the shop supplies from a nearby village and after all the expenses and paying off the rent of PKR 500, Irshad earns a monthly profit of PKR 3000, whereas by selling the ice her family would only earn a revenue of PKR 600 to 700 per month. She now seems to be content with the life as at least she has a source of income. Upon enquiring whether she planned on expanding her shop and capitalise on whatever profit the shop is giving them, she expounded on that, "We will continue this venture for a while, and if we are able to make enough profit only then we will try and expand it". Irshad is surely cautious now, and is happy with whatever little she earns. Expanding the Pakora shop poses a risk she is not willing to take so soon, but only slowly and carefully.

The sadness on Irshad's face was gone as soon as she talked about her shop but the

moment anything came up regarding her sons, her face reflected her sorrow. Nevertheless, she was happy and proud that her family is now living a sustainable life, as she said, "We eat till we are full now, all because of the help of SRSO." She answered with a hopeful "yes" when asked if she would want to put some money from the profit into savings. She says she has already saved some in case something goes wrong.

It was a grim situation throughout the interview but when asked about her younger son's name, as he runs the shop, she sees the funny side of it as he had the same name as hers. Irshad rambled on enthusiastically how Sindhis can have similar names within a single family, and for a very brief moment the room was filled with laughter.



“I spent my life the way I was destined to, aching for the smallest of luxuries. But my daughter will have a better life. She won't live like me,” Fauzia claimed.

This is a longing that Fauzia shares with most mothers in the world. Even as they teach their children values they have held close their entire lives, mothers hope their children will outrun them in the race of life. Fauzia hopes so, too, for her daughter who sat at her feet while Fauzia was perched on a charpoy. A gaggle of women from the neighborhood had gathered to listen to Fauzia recount her tale of struggle and cautious optimism.

In her village Baksho Sario, her family had little means. She had a Poverty Scorecard (PSC) score of 14, which put her in the “poor” category. The

reductive statistic did not cover the many ways Fauzia and her family had to toil every day. Fauzia and her husband worked in nearby fields. This was seasonal work, which meant that the family effectively had no source of income for almost half the year. The struggle had only intensified lately. Like many other villages of Sindh, Fauzia's village is suffering from an acute water shortage. The once-fertile fields withered under an unforgiving sun. Resultantly, Fauzia and her husband had to journey to nearby villages to find work, with the added travel costs further straining their small budget. They were compensated for their hard work with only a paltry amount. The main return was the wheat and rice that the landlord rather benevolently gave them.

“Whatever we made back then, was used to feed the family,” Fauzia recalls.

Although she had married off one of her daughters, Fauzia still had six mouths to feed. Most of her children were young and of school-going age. The family therefore, found it hard to make ends meet.

This might explain why it was of paramount importance to Fauzia that her daughter has a different life than she did. Some time ago, an organisation by the name of Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) came to her village. They were offering loans, grants, and training courses. When Fauzia found out about their stitching courses, she rushed to have her daughter Rashida enrolled.

Rashida is a shy young girl with sparkling eyes and a rather reluctant, although lovely, smile. Sometimes, she perks up when her mother talks of her diligence. Other times, she modestly casts her gaze downwards. Rashida learnt to stitch in the workshops organised by SRSO. Soon, she could sew complete dresses. The next step was to buy a sewing machine.

Rashida is a sensible young girl. Even before SRSO came to her neighbourhood

with its message of saving money and collective action, Rashida had already invested her savings in a neighbourhood “committee”, which had been formed by young girls to save money for weddings. Rashida could get PKR 8000 from the committee, and Fauzia pitched in PKR 8000 from her own savings. Rashida bought a sewing machine and got to work. Women from the neighbourhood started to give her their clothes to stitch, and Rashida dedicated herself to her work.

This past Eid was the happiest Eid the family had celebrated in years. Every member of the household had new clothes to wear for Eid which Rashida had lovingly sewed for them. More importantly, the orders for stitching had increased many folds as Eid approached and women scrambled to have their clothes ready for the celebration. Rashida and her humble sewing machine had managed to make a whopping PKR 5,000 from Eid orders alone. It truly was a festive day.

Even as Rashida supports her family financially, her doting mother is not oblivious to the impending reality of her daughter’s marriage. She hopes a good

proposal will come for Rashida, who will be able to work and fend for her family after marriage. As Rashida leaves to engineer a better future for herself and her husband, what will become of Fauzia and her family?

Fauzia has a strong conviction that God will make ease for them later. Soon, water will stream into their village and the fields will bloom. More specifically, she hopes to find work for her son. She has some idea of the Community Investment Fund (CIF) that SRSO gives and hopes to procure one soon. With the CIF money, she hopes she can set up a small vegetable cart for her son.

Fauzia ended her conversation with a hopeful, emphatic note. Whatever happens, she and her family will not sit idle anymore.





Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI)

Kalsoom

Theba, Abad

Women in Goth Thebba dreaded going out to get water for the family. The hand pumps had been installed a little outside the village. While men worked in the fields, women of the household were tasked with bringing water for the family. As the women ventured out towards the water, mawaali men populated their path. Mawaali men, as the women described them, are men with no work to do. They dot the streets and puff cigarettes all day. If a woman passes by, they make sure that they have a lecherous sentence ready to greet her. It is no wonder that the women abhor the mandatory trips to get water. These trips were just one of the many worries eroding the sanity of these women. The

water they got from outside the village was clouded with muck and tainted with impurities. Unsurprisingly, the village was in the throes of Hepatitis epidemic. Every few days, someone fell sick with the symptoms of Hepatitis C, as diagnosed by the local medical practitioners, but no one could point to the cause with any certainty. However, it was a common belief of the community people that the reason behind the diseases was unsafe drinking water.

The women of Thebba recount their struggle in an office. Posters of local Sufi saints adorn the walls and under their beneficent gaze, the women sit and discuss local issues. No woman is perched on a chair; there is no furniture in the room and no hierarchies. Instead, women sit on a floor on which a rilli, a colorful Sindhi quilt has been draped.

The village was grappling with these problems when the team of SUCCESS programme of SRSO began to engage with the women there. The social mobilisers of SRSO helped women make the connection between impure water and Hepatitis C. Moreover, SRSO showed them the journey of collective action, a journey that the

women undertook themselves. Five Community Organisations (COs) were formed and later, as the villagers' steely reluctance towards the organisation softened, the number increased to nine. Kulsoom was elected as the VO manager, while Shabnam was made the President. When the Village Organisation (VO) convened to lay down the Village Development Plan, they decided to prioritise the installation of hand pumps in the village. Kulsoom took the lead on the first Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) project of the VO.

She contacted the team at SRSO, who tested a sample of the water. Soon, funds for the six handpumps began to stream in. Engineers arrived, and Kulsoom began to guide them around the village. She helped them identify the spots in the neighbourhood where the handpumps could be installed. When labourers began to work, they did so under Kulsoom's unforgiving gaze.

"Sometimes, they had to dig to three feet, and the labourers would stop at two," Kulsoom reminisces. "I would chide them and send them to work again."

The men watched from a distance, cautious to not get involved in the menial work. The men's passive, almost encouraging response seems uncharacteristic, given that these men had vehemently protested when the women had joined together for a CO earlier. Earlier, the VO President Shabnam had recounted how she would sneak out of her house for VO meetings without telling an especially restrictive husband.

"They did not stop us this time," Kulsoom explains. "They just smiled as they watched us work. They really wanted someone else to take initiative."

After the handpumps, Kulsoom and her team have their eyes set on other issues. The women rattle off a list of issues the community faces; the electricity cuts, lack of streetlights, the lack of cleanliness. Kulsoom has a funny account to relate about the one time she tried to lobby for a sweeper with a local politician.

"I called him, and I said, "I am Kulsoom from Thebba". I told him that we really needed a sweeper. He asked us to wait until after Eid," she remembers. "I called him after Eid and he said we should wait until the 1st of July. I called him after the 1st of July, and now he doesn't even pick up."

Kulsoom and her companions realise that it is tough to get better infrastructure, streetlights, or even a sweeper. However, these women have seen their courage and persistence work wonders, and that is what keeps them going.





Khalida had had five children before. However, with her last pregnancy, she could sense that something was different. This one hurt more, and Khalida had an inkling she might need extra help. She had never considered it necessary to head to the hospital with her prior pregnancies. However, almost a year ago, some people from the EU funded SUCCESS programme of Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) had come to the village and urged the residents to form a Community Organisation (CO). Soon after, Khalida, who had a Poverty Scorecard (PSC) score of nine, had obtained a Micro Health Insurance (MHI) Card. The MHI card was to come in handy as Khalida's labour grew increasingly tough.

A year later, Khalida now sits in the courtyard of a shared settlement. Burrowing into her lap is a healthy girl child. Every

so often, the baby whimpers and Khalida caresses her forehead to pacify her. The baby, despite the difficult delivery, was born healthy thanks to adequate and timely medical help. Khalida reminisces about those difficult times. Had she not had an MHI card, she would have had to "borrow money from someone," she believes. Any debt would have only strained the family's finances even more. A year before the birth of her last child, Khalida had married off an older daughter and borrowed PKR 20,000 from neighbours and family members. So far, the family has been able to return PKR 15,000.

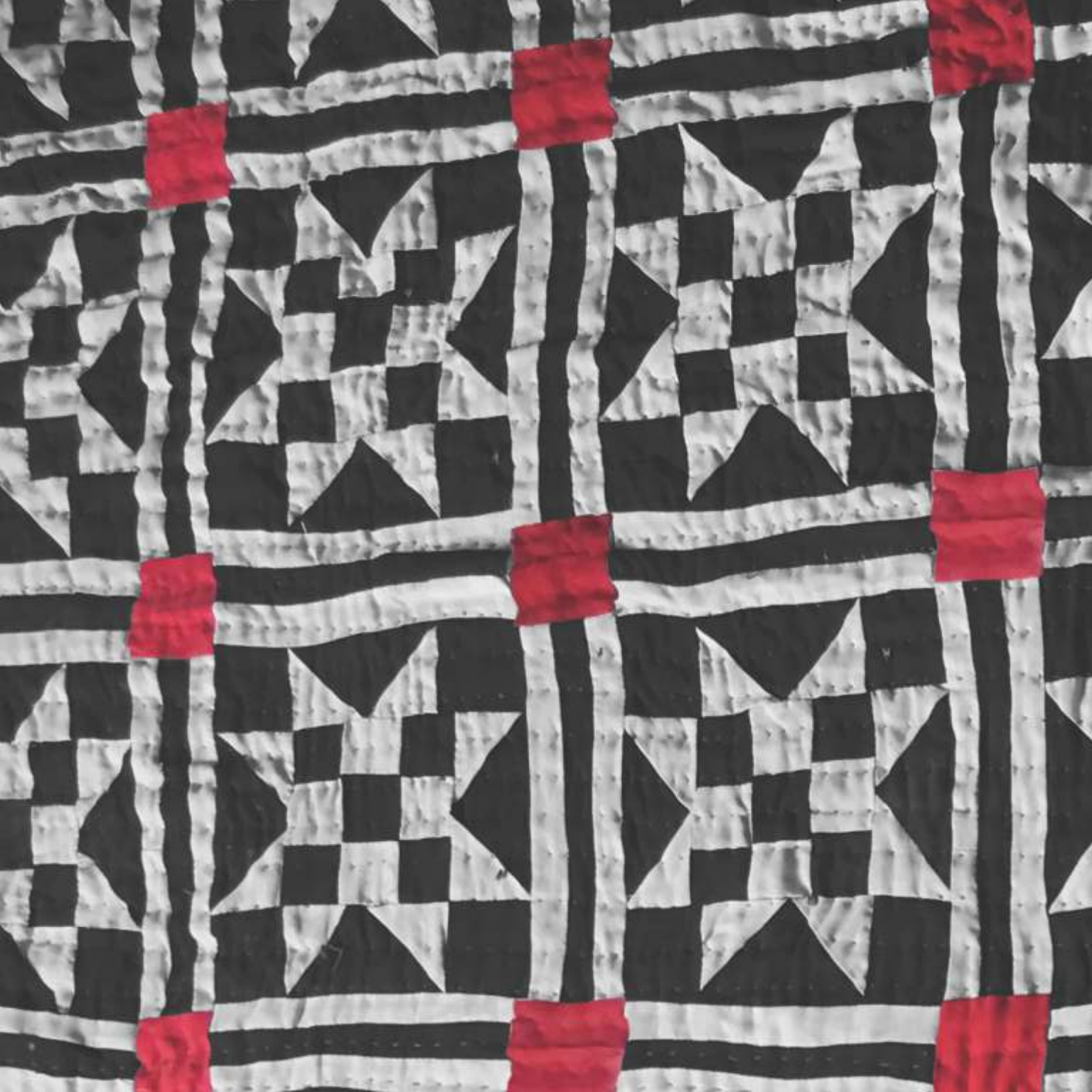
Khalida has few other sources of income. Most of her family is dependent upon agriculture. She herself stitches rilli, the stunning Sindhi patchwork quilts, at the request of neighbouring aristocratic



families. Each rilli takes more than a month to complete and fetches a couple of thousand rupees. By her own estimates, the family manages to make around PKR 5000 each month and can save around PKR 100 monthly.

Although Khalida is a shy woman of few words, the women around her do most of the talking. A family member claimed that Khalida was an exceptionally young bride. Such marriages often mean that women are hindered from getting an education and reaching their full potential. Many of the more immediate issues that these women face, such as poor health, can be traced back to the poverty and a lack of opportunities. While SUCCESS works on remedying the more urgent issues, it remains committed to helping women claim agency over their lives and bodies by providing them a health safety net in the form of an MHI Card.







છત્ર નંબર 8

સેશન નંબર 3
બાર જી પેદાશન ઇ વલ્લો (Birth Spacing)
કલ્પાઈ જો બેરિયોન પાસો

A woman in traditional attire, including a patterned headscarf and a shawl, is shown in a contemplative pose. She is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The background features a patterned fabric, possibly a tent or a wall. The entire image has a monochromatic yellow-green tint.

LEGAL
EMPOWERMENT



Community Awareness Toolkit
(CAT) Sessions

Fareeda

Dildar Khoso, Miandad Chingni

It was a beautiful day, and the sight of children with beaming faces made it even more exuberant. For a moment, one could not tell the appalling issues these little angels and their families were facing on the daily basis. They may have adopted this smile as a remedy to forget their problems for a while, before going back into the harsh realities of life.

As I entered the room, the laughs and giggles started to get even louder; looking around, my eyes fixated on a young woman standing at the corner of the room just smiling excitedly. While the children pushed each other away in shyness, I made my way towards her - she introduced herself as Fareeda, diffidently.

My first impression of Fareeda was proven wrong, realising soon afterwards that I had misjudged her as a reserved and shy person. Instead, she was bold and outspoken with a visionary outlook about life. Initially, working in the village Allah Rakhe Jalbani as a Community Response Person (CRP), the people who knew Fareeda asked her to work here in Dildar Khoso as well, since there was no

educated woman in the village to fill the seat as a CRP. She was well known in the two communities, hence was happily chosen for the said job. Embarking upon her new journey, soon she started to get hold of the greater responsibilities - delivering sessions on Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) being one of them.

Sitting in a classroom and surrounded by the children, she went on telling how, through the continuous CAT sessions and the awareness raised because of them, the women of Dildar Khoso realised the significance of education for not just the future and progress, but for their daily lives as well. Fareeda, on insistence of the community women, endeavoured day and night and finally managed to open the first ever school in Dildar Khoso. Looking at the children around her and grinning with pride, she said, "So when I was delivering lectures on the importance of education during our regular CAT sessions, the women here realised that they do not have a single school in the area. Fortunately, due to our sessions of Community Skills Management Training (CMST), we were aware of how we could contact the higher

authorities and make connections with them. Thus, we thought of making some linkages and luckily, as BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) was already operating in Allah Rakhe Jalbani, we contacted them to build a school in Dildar Khoso as well. With the combined efforts of the Village Organisations (VOs), BRAC was contacted and here we are, sitting in a classroom we helped set up". One cannot emphasise enough the importance of schools in the contemporary times, knowing this, Fareeda and the community women knew very well that they had to make the school project a success.

The journey towards a better way of life is never easy; the strain gets bigger if the resources at your disposal are already on a low. In addition, how you face the hardships and pave the way forward, really matter. Fareeda's journey was no bed of roses, "My family used to oppose the idea of teaching as I had to walk 30 minutes daily. Nevertheless, I would always tell them that I did not get education just so I could reap the benefit myself only. What is the use of getting educated if no other person can benefit from it?" proclaimed

Fareeda, knowing very well, how right she was. The Community Organisation (CO) members seemed to have a similar perception of life too. Being quite optimistic about their future, all seemed to agree to what Fareeda had said, “We now at least know our potential and how to make things work. Like we now know who to talk to according to the given situation. We have learnt about the importance of sanitation and hygiene, conflict resolution and peace building, family planning and health, and most importantly education. So, in a way we have become more enlightened and now can take care of ourselves” Fareeda and her peers substantiated that if you ask any successful individual to divulge the secret of winning at life, they would tell you about the power of optimism.

Although the school has, only two rooms where three classes are conducted, 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade, it is still a step towards success. The ratio of girls to boys, from the 90 students in total, is higher. The school has momentarily benefitted the girls, as there was already a school for boys in another town. “The children come happily to school now, at

first they were reluctant but now they come every day”, told Fareeda. “In fact, they argue that they would never miss a single school day but are willing to give up farming or cattle grazing now.” Although an unfinished cemented building with no doors and windows, the colourful charts and drawings cover up the shabby condition of most of the classrooms. The VO is very grateful, nevertheless, as now they have a school of their own.

The community women's realisation of the importance of education is reflected in their contribution to the cause as well. One of the more privileged members of the community lent her house to the school and shifted to a smaller one. Surely, this act of thoughtfulness will be remembered by generations to come. Another VO member, Raheema said, “There was not even a government school and the kids would play all day long or do the household chores like cattle grazing etc. We did not even know why education is so important. But now we do and we are really happy. Before this school opened, the children would just roam around doing nothing useful. One child from our village drowned in a nearby stream. If there was a school,

he would have been in school at that time and the incident would not have happened and we could have saved a life". It seemed that all the VO members present there knew the importance of education and were eager to send all their children.

Fareeda appreciatively reckoned her new job responsibility by saying, "I knew nothing. Now, I can talk about and teach others as well on education, hygiene, and health related concerns of a new mother and her newborn by delivering different CAT sessions". Fareeda has also worked on various health aspects as well, like vaccinations etc. Pompously, she enunciated about her efforts that health experts now come to their village for the treatment of women and their children.

Fareeda pronounced contently, "They say education is like a

third eye to human beings, and it feels incredible to learn that these people are benefitting because of the CAT sessions I have delivered and are learning about various important issues". One could easily grasp the sense of accomplishment oozing out of Fareeda's words, but there was more to achieve, she exclaimed, "Now we are planning to work on cleaning our streets and giving a good environment to our children. Whenever it rains, the rainwater enters our homes and comes up to our knees. Moreover, we do not have clean drinking water, we need to work on that too". The secret is to never give up and keep on making your way forward because along with you, the entire community would benefit as well. Here, Fareeda is almost benefitting 200 plus households in the six CO's in VO Dildar Khoso.





“For these waderas, a woman is nothing but the shoe underneath their feet, my husband warned me,” Iffat reminisces. “I was not one to back down, I said, “Very well, the waderas will learn their lesson when they get hit by the same shoe on their heads.”

In her village Mir Karam Khan, Kubbu, Iffat had always stuck out like a sore thumb. Married and sent to a village lying on the Sindh-Baluchistan border, Iffat was originally from Lahore. She was, in her own words, the only educated woman in a place where education was a privilege reserved for a few people. More striking for her, the place was in the clutches of wadera rule: Landowning families rented their farmlands and homes out to the villagers and expected them to toil for them forever. Iffat had initially been troubled by the isolation of the place but had slowly embraced

the challenge as God's will.

She started as a teacher with Sindh Education Fund. One day in 2016, she heard that some people had come to the village and were accused by the wadera of “misguiding” women. The people had heard of Iffat and asked to see her. It was then that SRSO social mobilisers talked to Iffat. Iffat took it upon herself to convince women to form four Community Organisations (COs), and then a Village Organisation (VO). It seemed as if the village had been waiting for such an opportunity. Within two months, they had collected PKR 10,012, Iffat recalls from her astonishingly immaculate memory. Iffat was keen on inclusion, and decided to make local Hindu women the President and manager of a CO. To this too, the waderas had protested, going as far as to assert that Iffat was not



even Muslim anymore. Iffat was not one to cow down and battled their rhetoric with sound religious logic.

Soon, Iffat and her colleagues had received LSO training and decided to set up an office in the Autaaq (public quarters) at Iffat's house. Despite objections from her family and the wadera, she went ahead with her plan. On the day of the inauguration, the wadera, quite hypocritically, turned up. He appreciated her efforts and delivered a speech. After the SRSO team from Sukkur left, he was back to his old ways. He held her husband captive and threatened to kick her out of his land. This time though, he stuck to his word and Iffat lost her home. When Iffat moved out of the village, 50 other households moved with her, so strong was their conviction in her.

Despite all of this, Iffat's most rewarding, challenging job has been as member in the Joint Development Committee (JDC).

When she had first attended a JDC meeting, the chairman of the taluka had disparagingly referred to her as the "second wife of that Channa". Channa is considered a low caste in the place Iffat is from, and

by making such a vile attack, he had believed he could erode her self-esteem. However, Iffat had retaliated, saying that she wished to be identified by her designation, and not by her status as anyone's second wife. In that meeting, the Health Chairman of the district was also present. Iffat took him to task over the polio epidemic. He was baffled by her questioning, explaining that he had appointed two lady health workers in the village to administer polio drops.

"I informed him that the lady health workers were women of the wadera's family, they are not allowed to set foot outside their house," Iffat recounts. "How could they be expected to go door to door and do their job? They were only sitting at home and collecting salaries."

Iffat pleaded with him to appoint a deserving woman. He seemed to see her point and changed at least one health worker.

Next, she met the District Officer and informed him that the teachers in the village government school were all the wadera's servants and were, again, only collecting salaries.

Iffat's focus had always been on making women self-reliant. One person who shared her vision was Shahmir Bhutto, the District Commissioner. When he teamed up with Iffat to help the widows in Kubbu, they decided to generate sources of income for them instead of giving them aid. They facilitated the women in making handicraft that were sold at exhibitions, and at marketplaces in Kubbu. Women formed groups and the leader usually transported their craft to these marketplaces.

Iffat had been recognised and derided as a threat by the wadera class when all she had wanted to do was to help people in her village. It may now be safe to say that they were right in their assessment of Iffat, only that they had underestimated her.



A large crowd of people, mostly men, are gathered for an event. In the foreground, three men are seated on a patterned rug. The man in the center is wearing a white kurta and is speaking into a microphone while raising his right hand. To his left, another man in a white shirt and dark vest is smiling. To his right, a third man in a white shirt is also smiling. The background is filled with a dense crowd of people, many of whom have their hands raised in the air. The scene is lit with a warm, golden light, and the overall atmosphere is one of a significant public gathering or rally.

PEOPLE BEHIND SUCCESS



Social Organiser

Umme Kulsoom Chandio

Getting people off their backsides and into action is what Umme Kulsoom Chandio does for a living. No matter what might pour down from the sky, no matter how heavy the clouds are bursting some people would go an extra mile to help others - Kulsoom being one of them.

Initially a Social Organiser (SO), she got promoted to Human Resource Development (HRD) officer Kamar Unit, within only two months' time period. Her work is related to organising the village people around an agenda to change the status quo, she really has to adopt to the surroundings of village life. Even adapting the way they 'talk and walk' so that the villagers do not feel less privileged or out casted.

Words like society, social and mobility are very common in the arena where Kulsoom works and they relate to each

other in many fascinating ways. For a human society to work efficiently and resourcefully, members must be able to see and communicate with one another diligently. As Kulsoom says, "It was difficult initially as we went door to door convincing people to join our hands. At times they even get resentful so we have to tackle every situation very carefully and make sure they understand our objective". This whole process needs immense motivation and steadfastness. Initially, it got quite difficult for her team to convince others to cooperate but with time, the locals realised the fruitful outcomes from the interventions hence slowly and gradually a bond of trust started forming.

The process has improved immensely, Kulsoom says, and the locals have acknowledged

it as well that by only joining hands and working together, half of their problems will already be solved. Kulsoom is an avid believer that collective problems need a collective solution as well. Explaining this further, Kulsoom gave a real life example asserting, “If a single household saves, it’s only for their own use but collectively as we all save it works on a wider scale benefitting all those related.” Which her team tries to deliver too.

“We try to give them living examples and motivate them. Just because they are farmers, their children do not have to follow the same path too, we tell them that they can become doctors and engineers as well. We try to guide them for a secure future and better living standard,” claimed Kulsoom.

This arduous journey that Kulsoom is on had quite a few twists and turns as well.

Majority of the issues centre around conducting Community Skills Management Training (CMST) sessions, and convincing the women to attend the three-days training is the most difficult part, as mostly the men do not allow their sisters or wives to travel to places outside the village, hence due to the strictness the women deny to be a part in it. This prevalent mind-set hinders the developmental prospects, making it an even more difficult path to achieving sustainability, as Kulsoom narrates, “Even if the husbands allow them, her cousin or a distant relative would oppose her participation in the sessions. If we want to convince someone or mobilise someone we start doing it with the males first because mostly they create the issues.” Even with all the hurdles Kulsoom carries on her work with undying zeal and passion.





Social Organiser

Naushaba

Naseerabad

Women are an integral part of society but conservatism in Naseerabad has played the role of an obstacle that is keeping girls away from higher education and working outside. An air of melancholy surrounded Naushaba when she compared the women of Naseerabad with other women, questioning herself as to why the women of her area are unable to contribute towards the society and are limiting themselves to the household only.

Naushaba, being from Naseerabad was well aware of the ground realities of her area and always wanted to work towards changing them. Now, as the Human Resource Development (HRD) officer for SRSO SUCCESS programme in Naseerabad, Naushaba has eight Union Councils (UCs) under her Senior Management Team (SMT), where she works towards organising

Community Organisations (COs) and Village Organisations (VOs) of women, simultaneously giving them trainings as well. Being a woman herself, she is on a mission to mobilise other women around her because she had witnessed first-hand, how backward the women of her area were - only confined within the four walls of the house. She made up her mind to provide these women platforms through which they can brush up their talents and utilise them in a positive manner. "Although it was a difficult task to convince people at first,' says Naushaba, 'but with the passage of time, my team has started to gain the trust of the community people and hence we have successfully formed the COs and VO's."

Naushaba today, is a vision of empowerment, a fierce woman knowing exactly what she





wants from her life and is firmly going after it. Proving her passion, strength, and independence, she excitedly expressed, "As I finished my education, I knew from the beginning that I wanted to work for the poor. Seeing the condition of the people who need help, especially those around me, I wanted to do something. So just imagine how happy I am in this job which facilitates me to do exactly that." It is rare to see people enjoying and being passionate about what they do, and Naushaba just sets an example to look up to, further strengthening the spirit of bringing about a change.

However, it was not all roses from the start. When Naushaba started her job, the locals opposed the interventions. They would give Naushaba a tough time in gathering women together for the social cause, but with time and increasing awareness, the backlash stopped and they became rather welcoming. An anecdote from Naushaba's efforts is worth mentioning here, "a group of 25 women members from Naseerabad city's tanzeem were able to set up a small tire-shop for an impoverished woman's son, by remarkably saving up to PKR 32,000 within only six months' time frame," She narrated proudly.

She continued, 'I have maintained around 25 tanzeems (Community Organisations) in Naseerabad city where they avail different benefits like Health Cards etc. and work tirelessly towards improving their living standard through collective action.' Naushaba's undying efforts have led to the people believing in her and following her to achieve tasks which seem impossible at first.

"It was a great feeling that I had been selected by SRSO," says Naushaba. The best part of her job is that she gets to see

the fruitful outcome of her hard work. She also mentioned how during the Programme Introduction session, women had tears in their eyes as she explained how their problems can be solved and that she was there to help them get out of this vicious cycle of poverty. She adamantly said, "All one needs to do is show them (women) the path and then they would do the rest." Naushaba further went on quoting the popular quote attributed to Bill gates, "If a person is born poor it is fine and acceptable, but if s/he dies poor, then it is not." Her deep contentment was quite visible when she gave examples of women who, with perseverance and self-confidence, were able to drastically change their lives. "It feels good when women are no longer oblivious to hygiene, health, and importance of education. The poverty level is very high here in Naseerabad so it feels great when women give positive responses regarding our work with them. And they truly are moving forward due to the work we are doing here" recounted Naushaba proudly.

KAMBAR SHAHDADKOT 2016-18



146,804

Households Covered by
Poverty Scorecard Survey



87,701

Organised
Households



4,457

Women Community
Organisations (COs) Formed



583

Women Village
Organisations (VOs) Formed



37

Women Local Support
Organisations (LSOs) Formed



8,190

Women CO Members
who received CMST



1,222

Women VO/LSO Members
who received LMST



292

Community Resource
Persons (CRPs) Trained



102

LSOs/VOs with Community
Investment Fund (CIF)



3,039

Households Benefiting
from CIF



167 million

Amount of CIF (PKR) given to
LSOs/VOs





13,618

Women Insured



18,568

Men Insured



69,636

Children Insured



10

Community Physical
Infrastructures (CPIs) completed



16.5 million

Cost of CPIs (PKR)



4,854

Households benefiting
from CPIs



16,170

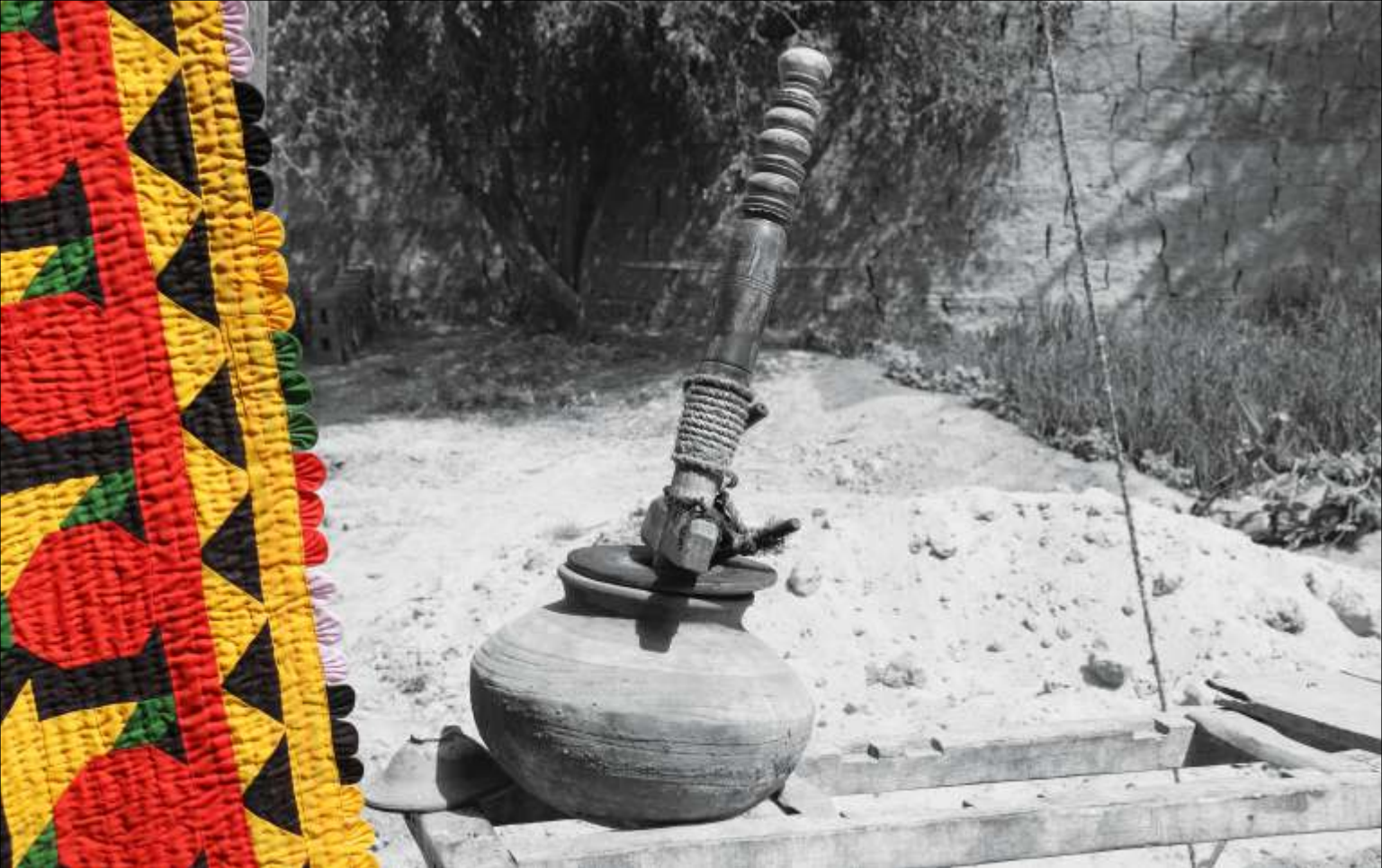
Households Insured through
Micro Health Insurance



338

Beneficiaries of Technical and
Vocational Skills Training (TVST)





EUROPEAN UNION

"This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union."



Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme

SUCCESS is funded by the European Union

RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES NETWORK

3rd Floor, IRM Complex, Plot # 7,
Sunrise Avenue (off Park Road),
Near COMSATS University, Islamabad, Pakistan
Phone: +92-51-8491270-99, Fax: +92-51-8351791

Web: www.success.org.pk
Facebook: [successprogramme](https://www.facebook.com/successprogramme)
Twitter: [SUCCESSinSindh](https://twitter.com/SUCCESSinSindh)
Instagram: [SUCCESSinSindh](https://www.instagram.com/SUCCESSinSindh)

More information about the European Union is available on:

Web: eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan_en
Facebook: European Union in Pakistan
Twitter: EUPakistan