

SUCCESS

ISSUE-06 | April 18 - October 18
Bi-Annual Newsletter

COVER STORY

SUCCESS AT THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2018, AKA THE 'DAVOS' OF THE DEVELOPMENT WORLD

Sindh Union Council and Community
Economic Strengthening Support Programme



EUROPEAN UNION

(SUCCESS is funded by the European Union)



SUCCESS



EDITORIAL

Dear valued reader,

Our shared global experience tells us that no economy, society, or country can achieve its full potential unless both men and women, who form an equally large chunk of our global population, have an equal role in driving economic growth. A recent study conducted by IMF “determines that women’s economic empowerment is key to growth” and could boost Pakistan’s GDP by 30%. Various studies around the world measure how the participation of women in economic activities positively impact their agency to make decisions for themselves and their households. This is also why, out of the five programme interventions of SUCCESS - such as the Community Investment Fund (CIF), Income Generating Grant (IGG), Micro Health Insurance (MHI), Technical and Vocational Skills Training (TVST) and Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) – the impact of CIF and IGG can be seen in a different way, as it provides economic agency to the women and their households. It is also why these two interventions, in addition to the development of the Joint Development Committees (JDCs) are linked more with the sustainability of the programme, which has remained a prime focus for the third year of implementation.

The current issue of SUCCESS is the sixth in our series of bi-annual newsletters that present an overview of our year in two parts. Ranging from stories from the field, from staff members, to updates on events taking place through the reporting period, the newsletter provides a glance on what has transpired. At the end of this year, even though the main outlook of our issue remains similar, we have

been inundated with positive stories of inspiration from women from all eight districts of SUCCESS. With the challenges being faced, many have come a long way to standing for themselves, whether it is about turning a deaf ear to the misgivings of those who do not support them, or whether it is about making plans to start their own small businesses and leading others in the community to do the same. Every story has been one of inspiration, and through various activities and collaborations during the year, we have tried our best to bring these to you.

As we proceed through the years of SUCCESS, we are time and again inspired by the stories of women who are today empowering or being empowered by the work of SUCCESS throughout the eight districts of Sindh. This year has been an year of inspiration for us, and through this issue, we hope to deliver just that to you and more. In this issue, we celebrate the progress that has been made so far (read how we took SUCCESS to an international audience at the European Development Days 2018 in Brussels) while emphasising the work that remains to ensure empowerment for the women of Sindh leading to better lives for them, their households, and their communities (read Khalida’s story as she shares her experience of being a Community Resource Person in Larkana)

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of SUCCESS as much as we have enjoyed preparing it.

Happy Reading!

Saman Sardar,
*Communications Officer,
SUCCESS, RSPN*

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(SUCCESS is funded by the European Union)



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Content Management & Edit:
 Reviewed By:
 Design & Publication:
 Image credits:

Saman Sardar, Communications Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN
 Fazal Ali Saadi, Programme Manager, SUCCESS, RSPN
 Dot Advertising

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SUCCESS AT THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2018, AKA THE 'DAVOS' OF THE DEVELOPMENT WORLD

Brussels, June 5-6, 2018

European Union (EU) funded Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme was showcased as a best practice project at the Global Village of the 12th annual edition of the European Development Days (EDDs), held in Brussels on June 5-6, 2018. The European Development Days are Europe's leading forum on development since 2006. Organised by the European Commission, the European Development Days (EDD) bring the development community together each year to share ideas and experiences in ways that inspire new partnerships and innovative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. More than 8,700 people took part in and attended the EDDs on June 5-6 in Brussels.



In addition to the stand display, Chairman RSPN, Shoaib Sultan Khan, participated in a panel titled 'Changing Women's Lives in the Rural World - Strengthening the Voice and Participation of Women and Girls in the Rural Economy' organised by the European Commission. RSPN team, also including a female leader of community organisation from Kambar Shadadkot - Nadia Junejo, travelled to Brussels to organise the stand for SUCCESS programme at the EDD 2018. RSPN's representation at the forum helped bring SUCCESS, its stories and the EU's work in Pakistan in light to an international audience.

At the stand, the first day was categorised

by a lot of visits and interest at the stand mainly generated by people interested in the region, or those who are working on similar approaches. The cultural crafts items were a big hit in general for display and for drawing people to the stands. The conversations revolved around people's interest in the SUCCESS programme's approach of social mobilisation and some with organisations willing to connect professionally with Rural Support Programmes over topics of mutual interest in the region. The second day was characterised by the visit of Pierre AMILHAT, Director for Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf Countries and Pacific to the stand and later by Shoaib Sultan Khan's participation in the session



Changing Women's Lives in the Rural World, Strengthening the voice and participation of women and girls in the rural economy. He spoke about the RSPs approach of social mobilisation and how it works to reinforce gender transformation in EU funded SUCCESS.

Nadia also shared her experience during the session, and EC's DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL Marjeta Jager, especially mentioned SUCCESS in her closing remarks for the session, saying 'I would like to mention here the proven example of success of the SUCCESS

programme in Pakistan where poor rural women from 770,000 households are supported to form more than 30,000 community organisations, in more than 3000 village organisations, and they are accommodating women's access to key public services in fighting poverty."



The visiting team were invited and hosted for a dinner by Her Excellency Naghmana Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg. The dinner, among others, was also attended by Member European Union Parliaments Ms. Nosheena Mubarak, Dr. Sajjad Karim and Mr. Wajid Khan. The two-day event, in addition to being an excellent opportunity to introduce SUCCESS to a wider global audience, was also a great forum to bring forth the RSPs approach of social mobilisation and Community Driven Development (CDD) to an international audience to develop a network that allows possible collaborations in the future.

ON SUCCESS-FULLY BREAKING STEREOTYPES



Three years since inception, SUCCESS has achieved breakthroughs in 8 districts of Sindh, meeting the objectives chalked at its initial stages. With communities organised and mobilised, the SUCCESS framework delivers the concepts of women empowerment gaining its central space in local culture and communities of Sindh. It is now time for the programme to reap more benefits from the processes it initiated with the support of the European Union, Government of Sindh and Rural Support Programmes working in Sindh.

With time, cultures have not kept pace and the gender gap created centuries ago has remained deeply rooted in most of Pakistani society. This resulted in the creation of social biases and discrimination against women, which have severely held back

the society. Biases take girls out of education. Biases cause hunger and unemployment. Biases mean that women are deprived of healthcare facilities. Biases kill and destroy families. But, today, many courageous women and men have joined hands with the EU funded SUCCESS programme, and have carved holes in age-old biases in the pursuit of achieving women empowerment and removing gender gaps.

Bias 1: *Women do not have a need for Education, cannot be Entrepreneurs, their place is in marriage and the only Profession a woman needs is Housekeeping*

This stereotype is definitely most prominent and most difficult to overcome. SUCCESS has achieved major successes with the

support of the Community Investment Fund (CIF) and Income Generating Grants (IGG) – such bias has been proven wrong and overcome at points of contact.

Mumtaz, from CO Sada Baar, district Dadu, is a beneficiary of CIF loan worth Rs. 15,000 granted to re-establish a small shop (groceries and snacks for children.) for which she repays Rs. 1,500 per month. The CIF has boosted her empowerment in a way that she now has ‘power over’ her assets, and is able to contribute to household income.

The SUCCESS mandate has also been achieved through active inclusion of working women in the education and health sectors. Beneficiaries received Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) sessions on issues like education, vaccination, registration, childbirth spacing, hygiene, and maternity care and it has re-defined their views and opinions. For instance, it was narrated by an active LSO member, “Our women are now open to discuss birth spacing with their spouses, the programme has sensitised us on the significance of child education, and they gave us an exposure of outside world.’. And another woman shares her application of CAT, ‘We are now well informed on how personal hygiene contributes to health, during our community meetings, and we remind and help each other to achieve the hygiene goals’.

Bias 2: *Women’s empowerment comes at the expense of Men*

It is commonly perceived that women empowerment affects men ‘negatively’, hampers their growth, or harms their reputation.



Through SUCCESS's interventions, perceptions have changed and people have come to realise how an empowered woman can make the life of her family better and stable. The Micro-Health Insurance Card is one such intervention, which has allowed women to improve both her and her family's physical health conditions.

Jumo Khan, UC Dabhoon, village Hari Camp, was diagnosed with appendicitis which left him incapable of working without the means to cover his costs for surgery. Since his wife, Fatima, was an MHI card holder of CO Tara, 60% of his cost was covered by the programme. According to Jumo Khan, 'Initially, I had several objections over my wife's participation in the CO but I regret having that attitude and realise the value of a woman's participation in the CO'.

Bias 3: *Women cannot get resources for infrastructure*

In both rural and urban communities, it is predominantly thought by both men and women that men are more resourceful for infrastructure work, which made it highly important for SUCCESS to target the mind-sets of both genders.

Malookan, President of VO Dharti, village Barecha, District

Dadu, shared that both men and women were mobilised through the Community Infrastructure scheme for road construction and it empowered women to work as a team and manage the infrastructure scheme from planning to execution. ' This infrastructure has reduced our mobility constraints, and has given us the power to decide and act. It has also increased men's confidence in their women's abilities', said Malookan proudly. Therefore, the infrastructure scheme implementation at village level has allowed women to achieve that which men have not been able to in their communities.

Bias 4: *Women cannot lead*

It is said that women are incapable to lead; the successes of women under SUCCESS's community, village, and local support organisations speak volumes on it.

Women in villages are confident and articulate and portray many other positive leadership attributes as presidents, and managers, of these organisations. Successful women leaders at the LSO level are selected to be part of a Joint Development Committee where they meet with government representatives on important social issues. Zubaida shared her JDC experience on how her LSO had facilitated obtaining CNICs and birth-certificates for villagers and how she sought help from public offices to streamline the same.

These leading women deal with many stakeholders including feudal-lords, politicians, government, private sector officials, and civil society at the JDC level. This proves that women can lead and are good at it!

Bias 5: *Women break under pressure and so cannot be trained for technical activities*

SUCCESS has managed to change this local understanding by educating people that women are capable of getting trained on technical matters and SUCCESS has achieved this through Technical and Vocational Skills Training (TVST).

One strong example of the TVST is that of Hameeda – a member of Khudabad Masjid, Dadu district. She had a business proposal to open her own beauty parlour. Travelling outside of her village to get trained was undesirable for her family, thus, SUCCESS arranged a convenient workshop at closer proximity. Now, she plans to become a trainer and mentor so as to train other women to gain like her. With adequate help, Hameeda grew stronger and more determined.

Yesterday and Today

These are only a few examples ,extracted from a women empowerment study commission by RSPN under the SUCCESS programme in 2008, of how SUCCESS has brought about positive changes in enabling men and women to rise above supposedly impossible odds and change perceptions about cultural and social biases.

After being touched by SUCCESS, women have stepped forward to courageously support their communities by voicing their opinions and fighting illiteracy.

SUCCESS is hope!

RSPs ANNUAL STRATEGY RETREAT 2018



BHURBAN. July 3-5, 2018

Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) hosted a three-day RSPs' Annual Strategy Retreat 2018 on July 3 – 5, 2018, at Bhurban, Murree. Minister for Human Rights, Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan, and States and Frontier Regions, Government of Pakistan, Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha was the Chief Guest at the event. The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, His Excellency Mr Jean-François Cautain, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan, His Excellency Omar Zakhilwal, RSPN board

Members, senior management of RSPN, Chief Executive Officers and senior management of RSPs, government representatives, donor representatives, corporate sector representatives, members of Local Support Organisations (LSOs), academics, media persons, and RSPN officials attended the event. The event provided a platform for the participating organisation to share their achievements, challenges and experience for cross-learning and improved future programming.

35 YEARS OF COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT: NATIONAL CONVENTION OF LSOs 2018

ISLAMABAD. September 12, 2018

The National Convention of LSOs is organised by RSPN and RSPs every year to promote the substantial contributions made by the LSOs in inspiring the community driven approach to sustainability across the country. This year, the convention celebrated a decade of LSO conventions organised by RSPN. The efforts and achievements of community institutions were shared with the policy makers, donor agencies, government representatives, international and national NGOs, media, and over 100 LSO representatives from all the provinces and regions of the country contributing to a diverse group of more than 300 participants. The notable participation included Dr. Ishrat Hussain (Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Institutional Reforms and Austerity, Government of Pakistan), Mr. Milko Van Gool (Head of Cooperation, European Union in Pakistan), Dr Atta ur Rehman (Balochistan Madrasa Education Council Baluchistan), and Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan (Chairman, RSPN). The convention highlighted the endeavours and best practices of LSOs in 35 years of promoting the CDD approach to social mobilisation in Pakistan.



TREE PLANTATION CAMPAIGN



DADU. August 9, 2018

Thardeep Rural Development Programme has commenced a Plant for Pakistan campaign through community institutions in Dadu and Jamshoro districts. To promote the drive, TRDP convened various workshops for raising awareness in communities and conducted meetings with line departments. Thus, as a result, 11,600 saplings were planted during the campaign and most of the planted trees were Acacia, Neem, Moringa and papaya through various community institutions and the drive is still on the move.

SHARING EXPERIENCES AND LEARNING VISITS TO CHITRAL

CHITRAL. July 10 – 15, 2018

This year for the annual in-country exposure visit of the RSPs, Chitral was chosen to be a place of learning and exposure because of its experience of working with the community institutions fostered by Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and Sarhad

Rural Support Programme for nearly three decades. The visiting delegation comprised of officials from the Government of Sindh, members of community organisations, and members of SUCCESS team from the implementing organisations- TRDP, SRSO, NRSP and RSPN. The visit was arranged by RSPN.

SUJAWAL JOINT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (JDC) MEETING



SUJAWAL. September 26, 2018

The first JDC meeting was carried out in Darbar Hall, District Sujawal, chaired by Deputy Commissioner Mr. Riaz Abbasi and attended by district heads of various departments. With regards to forming linkages between LSOs and district administration, representatives from various LSOs actively participated in the meeting. They were also made aware of how to access government officials for their services. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the LSOs work and asked respective department heads for close coordination with them, particularly for tree plantation, polio vaccines and girls enrollment.

P&D-GOS TEAM PARTICIPATES IN SUCCESS ACTIVITIES



LARKANA. May 11, 2018

A team from P&D - Govt. of Sindh, comprising Mr. Sayed Amjad Hussain, Dr. Qaisar Rafiq, Mr. Mohammed Ayaz Keerio, Mr. Sohail Ajmal, Mr. Mohammed Khan, and Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed, participated in an Activist Workshop organised by the community institutions in village Wada Rahuja, District Larkana. A large number of women including community institution [CI]

leaders from COs and VOs participated and talked about their achievements. Team members admired the activities of women, especially their leaders, and encouraged them to continue their hard work and effort for sustainability. From SRSO, Mr. Mohammad Dittal Kalhoro [CEO-SRSO] and Mr. Zahid Karim Shar [CFO-SRSO], along with SUCCESS team including M&E manager, both DMs, and district professionals also participated.

EU DELEGATION VISITS NRSP

SUJAWAL. September 28, 2018

A delegation from the European Union (EU) comprising of the EU Head of Cooperation, Milko van Gool and the Project Manager Nutrition and Rural Development, Ms Shohreh Naghchbandi, visited EU funded projects SUCCESS, PINS and ILTS in Sujawal. The delegation met with Deputy Commissioner Sujawal Mr. Riaz Ali Abbasi where a brief presentation was given regarding to date progress and role of government departments in supporting the local support organisations (LSOs). EU delegation, then visited the beneficiaries of SUCCESS, and beneficiaries of PINS and ILTS at various hamlets and villages in the area. The delegation in particular met with CIF, IGG and TVST beneficiaries and praised their initiatives to provide economic support at household level.



EU's CULTURE EXPERTS MISSION VISITS SUCCESS PROGRAMME

LARKANA. September 9, 2018

The EU's Culture Experts Mission comprising of Ms. Virginie Wyart and Mr. Rashad Bukhari visited the district Larkana in Sindh. The CEO of RSPN, Ms. Shandana Khan, also accompanied the EU mission during this visit. First, the mission visited the archaeological site, 'Mohenjodaro', followed by a community leaders/activists workshop in a village near the historical site.

At VO Imam Bux Mallah, the mission participated in an Activists Workshop. The LSO leaders shared their achievements and future plans under the EU funded SUCCESS programme. Ms. Virginie Wyart interacted with rural women and the mission discussed with women leaders and SUCCESS how culture can be involved or used as a source of income to improve the economic conditions of poor households.



GENDER SENSITISATION WORKSHOP

HYDERABAD. April 07, 2018

A one-day gender sensitisation workshop was held on April 07, 2018 at Hyderabad Club, Hyderabad. Mrs. Rukhsana Bukero, Gender Coordinator was the convener of the workshop, the objective of which was to make the entire female staff of TRDP aware on gender concepts, recent initiatives, orientation on policies for sexual harassment and discrimination at the work place and to develop the way forward. The staff from Tharparkar, Umerkot, Dadu and Jamshoro participated in the workshop and it was co-facilitated by Mrs. Humera Noor, PO HRD and Mrs. Marvi Channar, PO HR. Mr. Allah Nawaz Samoo, CEO TRDP also joined the workshop in the concluding session.



NADRA MOBILE CAMP ARRANGED TO MAKE NEW CNICs



DHORI. April 20, 2018

A two-day mobile camp was organised in four different villages of UC Dhori for making new CNICs, facilitated by LSO Ibtada. NADRA mobile camp visited various villages [Sardar Ali Jarwar, Beero Khoso, Geo Khoso, Mohd Alam Magsi, Saifal Solangi] and made 191 new CNICs of males and females, who had them made for the very first time. The camp created awareness about CNICs: its making, expiry and renewal.

Telling our stories of **SUCCESS**

This year has been instrumental in terms of the outreach we have been able to receive for the programme. Telling our story is a very important part of the wider cause of SUCCESS for us, something that is almost as important as the purpose of SUCCESS itself, when it's done well. As part of the wider Communication Work Plan for SUCCESS in 2018, we collected, curated, and disseminated beneficiary stories to a wider audience in various forms and mediums.



Humans of Pakistan (HoP) is Pakistan's biggest photojournalism blog and website, which aims to break negative stereotypes about Pakistan through stories of the average Pakistani. SUCCESS collaborated with HoP to bring 15 stories of human interest spanning across all eight districts of SUCCESS to a wider audience. These stories generated under the hashtag of *#EmpoweredWomen EmpoweredPakistan* generated a great deal of interest on both Facebook and Instagram and sparked queries where people were curious about the programme, supportive of the women and their stories and offered to become a part of the wider cause.

FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGING LOCAL JOURNALISTS

It is imperative to address the fundamental problem of communication gap and knowledge asymmetries between the grassroots' development initiatives and policy making through making the best use of journalistic practices. The successful rural development programmes have not fully been integrated in the national discourse/debate of social policy. The EU funded SUCCEEDS programme is one of those integrated rural development programmes whose impact on the quality of life of the rural poor especially women must be disseminated through mainstream

media to the policy makers. RSPN engaged a development journalist to conduct a pilot meet & greet and exchange information with local journalists in Kamber Shahdadkot. As a part of this engagement, various news articles and opinion pieces covering the wider scope of poverty reduction and women empowerment in Sindh also appeared in The News and The Morning Mail throughout the second half of this year.

COMMUNICATION MIX PRODUCTS



In addition to news articles, this year focused on creating quality visual content in the form of video human diaries, photo stories, and story booklets that presented details of individual beneficiary stories. Nadia's story is one of courage and sheer optimism and determination in the face of all hurdles she's had to face. Fareeda is yet another inspiration who is a brave activist for her community and is working towards being a successful entrepreneur as well. Parveen and Farhana walk us through a day in their lives and how SUCCEEDS has impacted their lives.

Additionally, the ECHOES of SUCCEEDS launched this year is the first of its kind in the series of booklets that capture in depth stories which allow a glimpse into the lives of the SUCCEEDS beneficiaries and social mobilisation team. This book will eventually be published for all eight districts of the SUCCEEDS programme.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

as of September 2018
Three years of SUCCESS in Sindh



849,810

HOUSEHOLDS COVERED BY
POVERTY SCORECARD SURVEY



521,850

ORGANISED HOUSEHOLDS



27,436

WOMEN COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS (COS) FORMED



3,195

WOMEN VILLAGE
ORGANISATIONS (VOs) FORMED



275

WOMEN LOCAL SUPPORT
ORGANISATIONS (LSOs) FORMED



50,915

WOMEN CO LEADERS WHO
RECEIVED CMST



6,605

WOMEN VO/LSO LEADERS WHO
RECEIVED LMST



2,619

HOUSEHOLDS
BENEFITING FROM
INCOME GENERATING
GRANTS (IGGs)



124

MILLION (PKR)
AMOUNT OF INCOME
GENERATING GRANTS
(IGGs) GIVEN TO LSOs/VOs



2,846

COMMUNITY RESOURCE
PERSONS (CRPS) TRAINED



178

LSOs WITH
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
FUND (CIF) GRANT



106

VOs
WITH CIF GRANT



19,348

HOUSEHOLDS
BENEFITING FROM CIF



642,015,540

MILLION (PKR) AMOUNT OF CIF
GRANTS GIVEN TO LSOs/VOs



688,606

PEOPLE INSURED UNDER
MICRO HEALTH INSURANCE



204,154

WOMEN INSURED



213,786

MEN INSURED



244,491

CHILDREN INSURED



419

CPI SCHEMES
INITIATED



4,785

HOUSEHOLDS
BENEFITING
FROM TVST



41

JOINT DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEES FORMED
AT TALUKA AND
DISTRICT LEVEL



29

JDC
MEETINGS HELD

KHALIDA'S JOURNEY AS A CRP - LARKANA

Natasha Khan, Young Development Professional SUCCESS, RSPN



It was safe to say that nobody was more wise or more careful in their dealings, in the village of Rawat Khan Kherro, than Khalida Parveen, who seemed to be quite perceptive throughout her interview. Not only is she the community resource person (CRP) for the villages of Rawat Khan Kherro and Ali Sher Kherro, but she is also the manager of her community organisation (CO), Qasim Ghar in Panjh Ghot, district Larkana.

Due to continuous efforts of the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), Khalida became a member of the CO a year ago because she felt the need to improve her conditions and come out of the miseries of poverty. 'I am from a poor household and I wanted to learn, start saving and get better', she said, 'I joined because I wanted to finish our poverty'. After becoming a member, all the other women elected her as manager of the tanzeem (CO), which made her even more confident that she will and is capable of being much better.

When someone gets kicked out of the house while being a mother of two kids, life gets very unclear and one feels helpless, which is exactly what Khalida felt during past events in her life. She did not earn at the time and her husband, Naseer Ahmed, had a small shop where he would sell channay (Chickpea). This did not support them financially and after having three more children, their

monthly expenditure increased with it, making it even harder to make ends meet. This was not easy with a poverty score of only 12, as they had to bring themselves up to speed with the cost of their children's education as well as food. So, Khalida decided to start working as well. Being a CRP, she gets PKR 7,000 a month and along with that, she and her husband also became polio workers. Now, they make enough where they can save as well as spend at a reasonable rate: Naseer earns PKR 12,000 every month from his shop and they make an additional earning from their joint polio work. From their combined efforts, they started saving PKR 3,000 per month and that had a positive impact on their lives as they could support their family more.

Being a CRP has been a rewarding experience for Khalida. She gives awareness sessions for the community, in which she talks to women about social issues and concerns: she raises their awareness about matters regarding the importance of cleanliness, keeping gaps between pregnancies, how to avoid certain illnesses, and much more. Khalida does her best at making women understand as she is determined to make a difference in their lives. 'Problems exist in every village, but women come regularly for meetings and I believe that everyone is benefitting from this', said Khalida about her dealings with women.



So, did life become better for her? Things definitely started improving, and from what I could see, Khalida shared her story with confidence, expressed great zeal while speaking and that made me see that she has definitely come a long way. Her husband, Naseer, was supportive throughout their journey with the SUCCESS programme, as he would sacrifice his work hours and take her for her meetings. 'I took her myself for the very first time', he said proudly, 'and through this programme, we found out what saving is...we got to know about the health card, how to take precautions when it comes to health and this is all thanks to the European Union who has supported individuals like us'. He also said, self-righteously, that he took her because he felt that if any member of the society can benefit from these sessions and meetings, then it is ultimately good for everyone in the village.

Eagerly elaborating on her story, Khalida shared that she got the community investment fund (CIF) of PKR 13,300, which she used to buy a goat and feeds her children with goat milk. This particular component of the SUCCESS programme is provided to women who want to improve their economic conditions and

status, but are unable to do so due to limited resources. Thus, the CIF provides them with financial access at their door steps and after the recipients have set up income generating activities, have managed to invest the amount or start saving, they repay the amount in due time.

About their future plans both the husband and wife explained that they had certain expectations from their children, and they are planning to invest more in their education. They want their sons to join the army and the daughters to serve people in hospitals so that they can make a difference in the lives of others. That has been the philosophy and purpose of their lives, which was very evident. 'What I love doing most in my life is helping my fellow villagers', said Khalida, 'I have never taken a loan before for fear that I wouldn't be able to repay it due to poverty, but I have always managed in what we get and leave the rest to God'. Khalida was happy and content with what she has achieved so far in her life and aims to help others to do the same. She strongly believes that she is respected and well reputed in her village now, which pleases her the most.

A NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY TO HELL

Zara Jamil, Documentation and Reporting Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN

TANDO ALLAHYAR. Contributed by SUCCESS NRSP team



And when you are in sheer agony of labour pains and you might just deliver the baby any second, that journey seems never-ending.

Now imagine the dismay when you find out that you went through the misery and pain for nothing! There is no one to treat you, and you might just lay there dying. You panic but you breathe and breathe, with the gritting fear that you and your baby might just breathe no more.

It is, literally, your never-ending journey to hell.

This tormenting thought clenches the heart of every pregnant female in rural Sindh. As days go by and she marks off the dates on her calendar, that ‘due date’ begins to look like an impending hounding reality rather than a moment that she would cherish forever.

“We took her to the hospital, God knows how. Only to hear the emergency ward staff tell us that the doctor is not in,” said Sajida. “We freaked out and asked the uninterested nurse about the doctor’s whereabouts and we were dumbfounded – ‘Dr Sahiba is in her private clinic,’” she added.

I could not help but ask – What private clinic? She was a doctor in a public sector hospital who was supposed to be on her seat to treat patients who came in that hospital but no, she had to run her own private business for privileged patients during the time she was being paid by the government. While her ‘less-privileged’ patients were paying her with the currency they could not afford – time!

“She delivered her baby on the footpath outside the hospital,” said a teary-eyed Sajida. “I thought she would die, but God was forgiving. The baby and the mother were both healthy. At least He has not forsaken us.”

You know how long it takes to reach a hospital on a donkey cart, traversing through landscape that mirrors a desert, under the open scorching sun, on roads that exist but barely so?

FOREVER

“I knew I had to do something. We women were not weak, not anymore at least,” claimed Sajida, her demeanour becoming stronger and her voice going up a notch as she said, with a tone as strong as her belief. “Twenty of us gathered, from the tanzeems (community organisations) of our district, and we went to the health department. They got so scared!” A fit of laughter broke out amongst the women. “I am sure they had never seen so many women before. Well at least not in the health department office,” grinned Sajida.

She continued to explain how the women requested to meet the head of the department to complain about the doctor and the hospital, only to be deferred off until ‘tomorrow’. A tomorrow that did not come for the next five days. Sajida and her fellow members of her district’s local support organisation (LSO) did not budge from their resolve. The women kept sitting in the office from am to pm, leaving behind their houses, the stoves, the men and the children – they were on a mission. Soon, the health department officers realised that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned!

“They had to listen to us. They changed the doctor! And appointed a new lady doctor in her place. She is very sweet and is always there when we visit,” exclaimed Sajida. “Now we know that there is nothing that we cannot do if we organise and fight for our rights. We have tasted the power of unity, and there is no stopping us anymore.”

The bittersweet reality in her voice brought a weak smile to my face. I could not relate to her hurt, but I could certainly feel my heart-wrenching. I never thought about the luxuries that I take for granted every single day. I did not need to fight for what I thought was a basic need – conveniently visiting the hospital for a routine check-up or that oh-so-often headache. The juxtaposition of my life over Sajida’s was surreal – a sharp bipolar division of the affluent and the underclass.

This story is inspired from a field visit to a ‘Local Support Organisation’ – a local women-led organisation operating at the Union Council level for community-driven development in rural areas by the rural support programmes operating in Pakistan.

SMALL ENTERPRISES, BIG DREAMS

TANDO ALLAHYAR. Contributed by SUCCESS NRSP team



“I belong to the community of a religious minority. I was only 8 years old when I did my first ever trade – I bartered my earrings with my friend’s lipstick, and later figured out that it was actually beneficial for me, since I needed the lipstick more,” warmly shared Jami as she reminisced about her childhood.

She further narrated, “I have always been keen about doing a business since I was a child; I still remember clearly that there was a wedding taking place in my village. I kept thinking about in as an opportunity, and finally went up to my brother, and asked him to buy me a pack of candies on his own credit from the city nearby, and promised to pay him back the next day. My brother laughed dismissively, asking me what I intended to do with the pack of candies, and how on earth can I pay him back in a day!” Pausing only for a moment to smile to herself thinking how proud she was of herself for having an answer to her brother, Jami continued, “I will sell them all at today’s wedding ceremony, I told him instantly. My brother went silent for a minute, looked at me and remarked, ‘you are a crazy girl’, and left the house.” This was the first time, I got angry with my brother, but I was too determined to give up, so I asked my mother to buy me a pack of candies. Luckily for me, she

agreed and got me one. “I still vividly remember that day I made only two rupees of profit, but I made a profit,” she beamed.

Jami is an active member of the Community Organisation (CO) and a mother who lives in village Hari Patel, District Tando Allahyar. She is also the manager of her CO, and participates actively in CO meetings and all other activities. “I had a very small shop where I used to sell candies and sweets for children. I always took it as a side business rather than making it a sustainable and alternate source of livelihood for me,” she stated. When we started to save in our CO meetings, and initially managed to save Rs. 1,500, I borrowed this amount, with the consent of all CO members, and invested it in running my business. My poverty scorecard allowed me to get Community Investment Fund (CIF) loan and I got Rs. 14,000 and used it to scale up my business. Now besides selling candies, I also sell some grocery and other items of daily use, and I think it’s only just the start. “I have always been in want of a business opportunity, and I think if women have the space and opportunity, we can also be good business counterparts. I don’t think women should ever give up on their dreams and once the time is right, it will all be possible for them.”



WAY FORWARD

As SUCCESS finishes its third year at RSPN, and the implementing RSPs enter the last stretch of their third year, we see that the original focus on making sure that the interventions are implemented smoothly, and in addition, an added focus was placed on making sure that the work been done so far is documented well and brought to the right audience. RSPs and RSPN maintained their momentum and the added focus was on strengthening ties with the provincial and local government in the wake of this year's general elections. So far, the support of the Government of Sindh, District Administration and line departments has been very instrumental in making sure that not only a comprehensive policy on poverty reduction is made and adapted for Sindh, but also in ensuring that there is a direct pathway for the communities to access their chosen representatives and play their role in the development of their villages and communities.

In addition to the launch and approval of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) earlier this year in March 2018, the formation and notification of Joint Development Committees (JDCs) at both the district and taluka level in eight districts of SUCCESS in Sindh has been a key achievement. During the second half of the third implementing year of SUCCESS, the JDCs completed their inception meetings and exchanged views on how to avoid duplication of efforts by sharing and exchanging information about the plans for local development and the combined resources available for them. Albeit in its nascent stage, this aspect of SUCCESS is most vital for the sustainability of the core idea of the programme – to empower women and thus their communities, to be able to take charge of their own development to reduce poverty. It is hoped, that the links created and sustained by JDCs, and the exposure provided to the community leaders through such an exchange will improve an involved process of local development and fit perfectly into the wider approach of Community Driven Development (CDD) in Sindh.

Moving forward, the aim remains to strengthen the sustainability of the programme so that benefit generated is long lasting. In the upcoming year, an added focus will be on generating a wider debate about the nuances of the questions that surround poverty reduction and women empowerment in Sindh and in Pakistan. The idea is to bring our work so far to an even wider audience in the public and in the field of policymaking to ensure that the rights questions are being asked and answered. We will be taking stock of what has worked so far, and what can be improved, research that has answered some specific questions related to a transformational shift in the aspects of women empowerment, and sparked some more.

SUCCESS

SINDH UNION COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

SUCCESS Programme is based on the Rural Support Programme's (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, 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.



EUROPEAN UNION

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**Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme
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

More information about SUCCESS is available on:

www.success.org.pk

 Facebook.com/successprogramme

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