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L A R K A N A

2018



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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

Sindh is the second largest province in Pakistan, with a population of 47.8 million, out of which 23 million people (with 48% female) live in rural areas, many of whom face unique challenges of gender inequality and poverty, despite that Sindh's land is abundant with natural resources and 70 percent of Pakistan's tax revenue comes from Sindh. The rural women of Sindh are carrying the burden of poverty and its negative impact the most because of limited livelihood options, lack of access to health services, limited decision making power, abysmal low literacy rate and lack of freedom of choice or expression.

The EU funded Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) programme thus aspires to work exclusively with over 700,000 rural women to empower them and reduce household level poverty in Sindh. It is globally accepted that without empowered women, we can neither reduce poverty nor improve the social sector indicators on sustainable basis. SUCCESS is based on the Rural Support Programmes' (RSPs) social mobilisation approach to foster a 'social pillar' to supplement and complement the two existing pillars of the state i.e. the 'administrative pillar' (President to Patwari) and the 'political pillar' (i.e. elected representatives from Prime Minister to the Union Councillors).

The Social Mobilisation strategy of the RSPs is based on a development partnership between the rural poor and the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs), both partners have to fulfil their obligations. The rural poor have to first get organised, identify an honest and sincere leader, adopt the discipline of savings to generate their own capital and meet on a regular basis to identify the potential of each poor household, through a households-level micro-investment plan.

The SUCCESS documentation team at RSPN, in collaboration with SRSO, interviewed beneficiaries in Larkana – managed by SRSO under SUCCESS programme. Our interviewers entered the field hoping to grasp an understanding of the channels through

which change can occur. The very act of transferring ideas to these populations seemed to be the most positive factor influencing change. A recurring theme is that when asked 'why' for example, why the women in villages didn't organise before, they would say, it has simply never occurred to us before. The very act of thinking and formulating new ideas can become a powerful force. For example, Bushra from Village Vheer said "Before this [SUCCESS], we would never meet other villagers, we had never considered meeting them." Her CO now meets every fortnight or at least monthly, the savings of their CO is currently Rs. 6000 and they have started helping their members with their CO saving. "Once, a lady's son got his hand caught in farming machinery and had to get it operated...Now, he is fully recovered and he was able to continue earning" The fact that they managed to change their way of thinking is an achievement in and of itself.

Similarly, the moment villagers of Peer Jo Goth became aware of Community Physical Infrastructures (CPI) project they organised their VO and immediately identified sanitation, namely latrines as their most immediate concern. They went through all the steps needed to acquire latrines on their own, with the technical support of SRSO of course. Sentiment is also shared by Hafeeza an LSO leader from Fateh claiming "A village can deal with internal issues, but for larger issues, which might be political in nature such as demands for infrastructure for example schools and roads, the LSO wields greater power purely because of greater strength through numbers."

It is said that the thing about good ideas is that they breed other ideas; the goal of SUCCESS has not been to grant a final outcome for poverty alleviation but set people on the path to achieve prosperity and forge their own success.

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SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN







Community Organisation (CO)
Imam Zadi
Khushi

Always playing the strong woman's role, always there when someone's in need and ready to wipe away other's tears, Imam Zadi has been the community's voice even before the formation of its Community Organisation (CO). It is no doubt hard to live in a poverty-stricken area especially if you feel responsible for others wellbeing. Yet, Imam has climbed over mountains through bravery and perseverance all on her own. She was relieved when Sindh Rural Support Programme's (SRSO) team came to her village.

Nonetheless, her husband deemed it unnecessary to participate with any such organisation and tried to restrict her movement. However, Imam was not deterred, she unabashedly declared to her husband "you sit here, I am going!". Unsurprisingly, most people would succumb to her sheer will power.

Now that she has become the manager of CO Khushi at the behest of her community, Imam has the responsibility of taking care of the CO finances. Although, she could only study till the 5th grade, she has a knack for dealing with numbers and has become an expert in maintaining records of the CO's monetary transactions.

In addition to helping members of her CO with their accumulative savings process, Imam has also been helping male members of her village as well. One of the many cases that she shared was helping a drug addict who was on the cusp of death. The addict's wife is a CO member who came to Imam to finance her husband's medical and travel expenditures to Sukkur. "It was a bad situation for the woman too," Imam narrates as the addict had also started abusing his wife. Considering it her duty, Imam treated the case admirably and with the help of her CO savings provided assistance to the woman. Fortunately, her husband has been successfully rehabilitated and "there aren't any more cases of domestic violence in his household," Imam expressed jubilantly.

Her own life has seen little change but her efforts have helped so many others that she is content. The only difference she sees in herself is that she is now able to assist people in her village more than she ever could.





Women have recently started to take charge of their lives, but they have been struggling to be considered equal to men. The notion that women are not spirited and resilient enough to handle pressures that come with certain positions, is slowly being proved wrong. Hence, instead of restricting women to the traditional gender roles; staying home and doing household chores, men are finally acknowledging women efforts too.

“Regardless of how women are 'supposed' to behave, at least they should have the same opportunities as men” complains Husna, the president of her Village Organisation (VO). Husna deep down still feels angry about marrying at an early age when she was still studying in second year. To this day Husna laments that nothing is in her power to reverse the damage done with her own education.

Despite earlier misfortunes, Husna, certainly has a way of turning things around. Being a mother of three daughters and three sons, she vows to never discriminate against her daughters in any way. She has in fact enrolled her daughters in a college in the nearby town of Larkana, which is approximately two kilometres away. Not just that, being a responsible VO president Husna has also enrolled many girls in her nearby village too who have never been sent to schools, unlike the boys. The injustice towards young girls is morally unacceptable to Husna, as it infringes on girl's rights and is also counterproductive as it can result in their talents being under-utilised.

Husna's face glowed and her dark eyes sparkled as she went over the details about her VO's progress. She currently has 15 women Community

Organisations under her supervision, which, she thinks is already a rebuff against those who try to disempower women. Under her supervision the VO has already embarked upon various missions to engage the community by bringing them together and fixing their problems. "Sharing their problems was a step in the right direction," acknowledges Husna, "as this was the surest way to incorporate everyone's problems and experiences into the best solution for the community".

Of all the shocks and traumas Husna suffered in her childhood, none remained in her memory more vividly than the time when she had to sell her only piece of jewellery. Now her VO caters to the need of women going through similar situations by providing them funds and grants without any strings attached. She wants to help, to soothe the women's anguish in any way she can. The bonds which women of her VO share is remarkable, as before forming the VO the whole community was not unified in any way.

Considering the benefits of planting trees, her VO has planted 500 trees with the assistance of one other VO. Bearing in

mind the rugged terrain of the region they chose the plants accordingly. "Neem (Indian lilac) does not require much water and is perfect for land like ours," Husna asserted. She further emphasised how it had the distinct quality of remedying skin allergies and was good for diabetic patients too. Her VO was also concerned about the increasing number of mosquitos in their area due to the stagnant water in the rice fields, which would result in cases of malaria. Hence, they spoke to the municipal committee of their village and asked them to limit outbreaks.

The VO's next agenda is to work towards building water tube wells in the village for drinking purposes. Unfortunately, safe drinking water is a scarce resource in Sindh, with some village women walking miles to fetch water. Every step of the VO paves the way forwards to a greater and better future.



Local Support Organisation (LSO)

Hafeeza

Fateh

Problems are not limited by scale, as such no individual can be expected to solve an issue too great for him/herself. Hafeeza knew that to help her family and fellow villagers, they would have to unite, as almost anything can be achieved through unity.

Hafeeza grew up in a family of five brothers and two sisters, her father, a labourer, could only afford to give her education up until the 5th grade. She yearned for more, but what could she do? She knew even then that education was an asset. She did not however, let it discourage her and when a female relative came to her one day with news that people had come to the village asking the women to get together for a survey, she was instantly interested. Soon a Community Organisation (CO) was set up, it was suggested that since Hafeeza had attained some level of education, she become the leader of the CO. Recalling the moment, Hafeeza says, "If I have





an opportunity to help the poor, I shall do so, those were my thoughts as I took the role of president in my CO.”

Her skills were quickly noticed. “When we formed the Village Organisation (VO), the other members said that I had a way with words, so I should lead it”. Hafeeza recalls, “It helped that my family supported me in this, my younger brother seated here especially so, he tells me to go as far as I can, he will be with me all the way.” Living in rural Sindh proved to be a hindrance, her other relatives particularly an uncle, told her parents that they should have her married off. However, her brothers continuously supported her.

It was a new experience for her, before she had never really left her village. In fact when she was sent to Sukkur for her LSO training, it was the first time she had left her village. “What would I do or say and what would the people there be like? I was very scared but persevered through it all.”

Her brother exclaims “My two older brothers joined the army and helped me get an education. I've learned a lot about what our rights are and how far we can go, all because of the education I got, but my

sister didn't have the opportunities to get this. Hence, I try my best to empower her now.”

Soon she became a member of her LSO, eventually selected by the other members of the LSO to be their leader. Hafeeza knew that the biggest benefits acquired from an LSO are strength through numbers, any issues they raise becomes an issue the local government is forced to address. She explains, “It's a fact that these organisations have helped us immensely. I tell other people, we don't have many people with a Poverty Scorecard low enough to directly benefit from the SUCCESS programme in our CO, however, in my LSO there are 10 villages, each VO consists of a village. A village can deal with internal issues, but for larger issues, which might be political in nature such as demands for infrastructure for example roads, the LSO wields greater power purely because of greater strength through numbers.”

Already having a Local Support Organisation (LSO) has proven useful, through it Hafeeza has helped a great many people, particularly in the

infrastructural development of educational institutions. Now through the LSO, plans are being laid out for several schools, particularly putting demand to the government for a primary school in one of the villages which doesn't have a single educational facility. A link road is also being planned as this particular village lacks that as well. When asked why she puts a great deal of focus on education, Hafeeza replies, "I could not continue my education. I try my best to learn even now, but it is hard, it is my hope that no girl go through difficulties like this as I am restricted. Even now, perhaps I will never be able to reach greater heights. These shackles have bound me, but let them bind no one else."





WOMEN LEADERSHIP

Most of the concepts we understand and use in our day to day activities all started somewhere. Their inception begins at a young age and what we do not observe through experience is taught to us from education both in schools and informally in our homes. It may seem surprising that the simplest of ideas such as that of savings, is not understood by everyone. However, to people like Bushra of Veehar Village, it was a foreign notion.

This is not a result of any shortcomings on her end, her parents had not saved money, instead spending it as soon as opportunity allowed, as did others she knew. That she should do things differently had never occurred to her. According to her if you did not spend money what was the point of it? Concepts such as savings must be introduced somewhere and that is one of the purposes of Community Skills Management Training (CMST).





CMSTs are for the presidents and managers of Community Organisations (COs), to teach them skills and knowledge required to effectively manage a CO and help its members to organise and raise their collective voices to solve issues they face. Bushra is the president of her CO and manager of her Village Organisation (VO). Her husband is a teacher, and they have six children. "We took training for 3 days, in 2017, we learned to save, how to organise ourselves into a CO and (VO)." Bushra recalls "Initially we were scared, because we didn't know what we would learn in these trainings, in fact we didn't even know what training was. It was the first time it occurred to me that we could save, we would always spend as soon as we could have enough savings. In addition, we could now also use what we saved to help others in need, which had never really occurred to us before."

Her training at the CMST brought her closer with other members of her community. Bushra laughs as she says, "Before this, we would never meet other villagers, we had never considered meeting them." Her CO now meets every fortnight or at least monthly, the savings of their CO

is currently Rs. 6000, ready to help any members in need. The change in mentality had also affected the men of the village, before this, the men wouldn't let the women leave the house let alone meet other people or women. The fact that they managed to change their way of thinking is an achievement in and of itself.

The savings have already proven useful. Bushra relates, "Once, a lady's son got his hand caught in farming machinery and had to get it operated. The CO was able to help him, though he only needed to visit the doctor and get some bandages. Since he was poor, it would have been harder before, perhaps her mother would sell a goat or some other valuable possession. Now, fully recovered he was able to continue earning, and soon even returned what had been borrowed."

Bushra's hopes for the future are just beginning, now able to lead her community forward, she hopes to add greater infrastructure to her village. The only aid she had been given were ideas, but these would prove to be enough. Armed only with her mind, Bushra hopes to be an example for her fellow villagers, an example of success.



Khalida is the Community Resource Person (CRP) of 23 *tanzeems* (COs), and whilst those around her have begun to sincerely appreciate her efforts this story aims to introduce it to a wider audience.

Khalida was the only educated woman in her village when a Community Resource Person had to be chosen. Her ability to actively engage with other members of her community was a useful characteristic. Khalida also has had experience of working for an NGO, which worked greatly in her favour to carry out a CRP's task more professionally and skilfully. She knew that she would have to face judgement from the community as she needs to go from house to house to create awareness on a wide range of topics including family planning, immunisation of children and women and importance of

having National Identity Card to name a few. Even though her husband is very supportive, the community seemed always against her. However, she did not let their harsh comments and disapproval dissuade her and continued with her sessions.

Khalida believes that every problem in this world can be solved through dialogue and reason. She has been an active advocate of proper sanitation, mother-child health and girls' education among other topics that she conveys. "People were unaware of the things that are so imperative to their basic health requirements and yet all these years there has been complete indifference" says Khalida, shaking her head disapprovingly.

To set an example, Khalida installed a toilet in her house, built only a month after she



became a CRP. She has also planted trees around her house and encourages people to learn and adapt. Such acts, she believes, will educate people and will likely strengthen her standing as a CRP amongst the people. Khalida has also adopted another unique way of delivering her message, she gives real life examples of how it was easier for people that complied with her suggestions compared to those who did not do so.

Khalida considers herself fortunate and indebted to her husband, who always supported her and her work. "No matter how educated a woman is, she cannot even leave the house without her husband consent around here," muttered Khalida as she lovingly smiled at her husband.

"It was not as easy as it may sound, I had to take many bullets for my wife in this journey and I am ready to take more," ensured Khalida's husband. He further exclaimed, "Now that my wife has shown results, people really appreciate my wife's work and acknowledge the potential of women in general."





A green-tinted photograph of a sewing workshop. In the foreground, a woman wearing a dark hijab is focused on operating a vintage sewing machine. The machine has 'SYNDORMA' and '1950' printed on its side. In the background, another woman is visible, also working at a sewing machine. The room is filled with various pieces of fabric and clothing items hanging on the walls. The overall atmosphere is one of industriousness and craftsmanship.

ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT
OF WOMEN

Nawab sits beside her buffalo, a new-born calf being the centre of attention for both. Having either of the two would have been a blessing and she knows it, it is a blessing that she would not have had, if it had not been for the Community Investment Fund (CIF).

Nawab's surroundings instead spoke volumes of how her financial conditions were before the loan she got from the CIF, so maybe that's why she ultimately plans on making a concrete home with her earnings. There was one *charpoy* (bed) only a few feet away from the pen and a wooden stool tilting more towards one side which Nawab tried to adjust herself, before continuing to praise her buffalo.

Nawab had bought the buffalo a year and half ago when it was just a calf for Rs. 30,000. She has taken a loan of PKR 15,000 offered by the Local Support Organisation (LSO) and the rest





she managed to pool on her own through some savings and her husband's earnings. Buying a calf worked exactly as she planned as now Nawab was selling four kilograms of milk every day in the market at Rs. 60 per kilo, earning around Rs. 240 each day.

Nawab was finally benefitting from it monetarily and within a year the loan was returned in only two instalments. Apart from the sales revenue, she now also benefits by giving her four children fresh milk every morning providing for their nutritional requirements, whereas before she could not afford to do so. Her husband was only a farmer working for a landlord, his earnings were not enough, but now she says things have changed. "My husband was the only breadwinner but now we have two, as I look after the buffalo and sell its milk."

She is an enterprising woman, concerned for her family's happiness and takes great care for the improvement of her household. Instead of only doing the household chores and being a financial burden, Nawab now considers herself a valued addition and refers to her buffalo and calf as her way forward.



Technical and Vocational
Skills Training (TVST)

Rukaiya
Pyaro Magsi

The scale of ones' dream is relative, some dream of power and fame, but for one small girl in the village of Pyaro Magsi, it seemed that her only dream was to stand on her own feet. Her wishes fulfilled, she can now hope for a brighter future, this is her story.

Rukaiya, age 18, sits beneath a fan powered by solar panels. She bought these panels herself, with money she earned. Her entire family consisting of both parents and ten siblings could benefit from electricity with little Rukaiya's help.

It all started when her mother, a member of the Community Organisation (CO), became aware of a Technical and Vocational Skills Training (TVST) offered by the EU funded SUCCESS programme. The aim of TVST specifically was to enable poor community members, particularly women, to provide a means for themselves. They would receive training in fields such as beauty parlour makeup, embroidery or





other handicrafts. Here was Rukaiya's means of a future for herself, with her mother's blessings she would try and attend these training sessions.

Her goals were initially met with resistance. "I have six older brothers," Rukaiya says "they thought, that it would be unsafe to allow their little sister to leave her house on a daily basis and return late into the evening. I said to them, I am your sister, won't you trust me in this?" Eventually her brothers did relent, although others in the village still protested. Now she makes five to six thousand rupees a month from doing embroidery on dresses. Her earnings have considerably contributed to the household, even her brothers would come to her to buy groceries.

"It was never an easy thing to get into because we were poor" Rukaiya recalls "we couldn't afford a sewing machine, which is required for my work. I had been raising a baby goat for a while now, I had little choice but to sell it along with my earrings". Now she can afford to get back all that she lost and has greater ambitions for the future. "Maybe I will be able to do embroidery on more clothes with practice.

Also, other girls in the village have been quite impressed with what I've managed to achieve and will probably go the same route. Maybe we can open a joint shop here in the village with all of us."

When asked if she ever expected to come this far, she replied "No, how could I? The possibility did not exist as I did not even know that this was an option. The world as I saw it, consisted of men earning a living, with women limited to housework. I could never have imagined it to be otherwise." Her mother adds "I have many children; I could not take the time out for the daily excursions the TVST entailed, but through my daughter, I have seen new possibilities. She is an example, not just for her sisters, but to other girls in the village. It is not just her personal efforts that they see, but the results they yield as well; could any of them have thought this could ever be?"

Rukaiya now looks to the future with a fresh perspective, knowing that new avenues have opened for her. If she ever hoped for a happy ending in her story, she might not have imagined it in this way, yet she is all the more grateful for it.







Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI)

Irshad Bano

Peer Jo Goth

Irshad Bano reaches out for her dreams, instinctively seeking them without any hesitation or reluctance. She is concerned for the happiness of the people around her and takes every possible measure for their improvement.

Being the president of the Village Organisation (VO) Peer Jo Goth, Irshad every now and then has to make decisions considering everyone's willingness and opinions. When the Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) intervention was introduced to her VO, they had to come up with a single project that could be beneficial for all of them. Considering the dire situation of her village, there were multiple structures that the VO wanted to improve. After a long thoughtful process her VO agreed to work on providing toilet facilities to the whole community, eventually building seven toilets.

“Before the toilets everyone used to defecate openly, but now we have latrines which are much more hygienic”. The village had already suffered an outbreak of malaria because of these unhygienic conditions. Yet Irshad exclaims “It was not easy at all to convince people to use the CPI on toilet construction”.

Despite only completing till matriculation level, Irshad had been diligently keeping a record of every financial transaction; the amount paid to each labourer, cost of materials and proper attendance of every labourer at work. It only took a month to complete all the construction and even on rainy days the work did not stop. “Now the men are finally acknowledging our efforts and we also made sure that they do appreciate it,” tells a member of the VO. With the help of field engineers of SRSO, the VO members had planned out every step systematically and purchased all the necessary material from the market themselves. This demonstrates that despite their minimum schooling, these women aim to be catalysts of change. One cannot help but wonder how much more they could achieve with the required education and appropriate resources.

“Projects like these give hope to this broken world” expressed another VO member. The seven toilets now benefit around 60 to 65 households, scattered around the VO. Irshad ecstatically expressed, “I wanted something that will benefit us all and not just me or a neighbourhood.” She clearly seems to understand that in order to truly progress, they must take into consideration the needs of all.



Razia lives in the village of Bachal Mahesar with her five sons, three daughters and husband who drives a donkey cart transporting fruit. Her husband's work is often seasonal, and their diet is dependent on leftover food and fruit from neighbours or vendors. This poor diet eventually resulted in a health scare within the family.

She narrates the story of how one of her daughters needed an operation, it began when her daughter started feeling a pain in her stomach. "I had recently become a member of the Community Organisation (CO) so I went to it asking for help. My CO leader told me that the Micro Health Insurance card I had been given after a survey, would help me get my daughter treated."

At first the doctor gave her daughter medicine for three days, she could only afford

food for one time a day so she wouldn't have been able to afford medicine on her own. Razia recalls, "When we took her to the hospital the doctor gave the medicine hoping that the kidney stone would dissolve and pass through her system. The stone proved to be too big, however, and an operation was required. The hospital I took her to was called Sarfaraz Medical Centre, the doctors there said this was the first time they had seen a stone this large in a child so young as she was only six at the time."

Tears welled up in her eyes, remembering how sad and fearful she had been back then. "Her father and I were so worried, we hoped and prayed. What else could we do? We didn't know what was happening to our daughter. The operation took place at night, and took about an hour,



throughout we were terrified. We wondered if our daughter would even survive? But look, she has made a full recovery; in fact she is back in school!"

Razia couldn't have imagined that this simple card could save her daughter's life. She explains, "We did wonder how much this card could help us. We didn't realise how much until after this event, our daughter was in such pain that she could do little but grovel on the floor for hours at a time. Sometimes I wondered if she was exaggerating the pain, and I would scold her, if only I knew. The doctors later told me that kidney stones are some of the most painful afflictions you could get."

The MHI programme is meant to only be available to the poorest households, evaluated through Poverty Scorecards. It is intended for those families who would not have been able to afford treatment on their own. The struggles of Razia's household may continue, however, they now have greater security against health scares. a safety net in case there is another health scare. Perhaps now they can begin to focus on their future.





LEGAL EMPOWERMENT





پتھر سے تیار

تندرستی

ہماری تندرستی کا انچھوڑنا اور صحت کو برقرار رکھنا ہمارے سب سے بڑے کام ہے۔



Community Awareness Toolkit
(CAT) Sessions

Khalida Parveen
Village Veehar

When SRSO first tried to form community organisations and provide training sessions to people in villages, they were met with resistance. People instead were more interested in direct aid for infrastructure. Despite the importance of infrastructure schemes, these are difficult to provide. It should also be noted that to achieve empowerment a change in mentality is required. This can only be accomplished through training sessions, such as Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) sessions.

Khalida Parveen most certainly underestimated how useful she would eventually become to her community. Trained as a Community Resource Person (CRP), she began organising CAT sessions in her village on various topics. Topics ranging from the importance of immunisation to family planning, subjects she had previously not known herself.

She recalls, "Family planning was such an alien topic to me. I did not

know that it was in the girls' interests to delay marriage till they were 18 and that it would result in fewer miscarriages and healthier babies. The elders would scoff when I told them this, they would say that they have been doing things their own way for ages. Why should it matter now? I highlighted how childbirths did not always go smoothly and that they themselves could recall many instances when complications arose. I persuaded them that nothing would be lost from this, eventually successfully convincing them to follow my methods."

The reality for young girls is worse than one might think. Complications during pregnancies and deliveries can be fatal to young mothers. Surviving childbirth is only the tip of the iceberg, many are still not mature enough to deal with the rigours of being a responsible parent. These young mothers tend to drop out of school. Additionally, birth spacing is not practiced, that can be a risk to both mother and child. It is a reality for many, but one which these CAT sessions help to change.

Khalida Parveen notes that these sessions have encouraged people to pursue their basic rights. For example, 20 women in her

village have acquired Computerised National Identity Cards (CNIC), which has allowed them to vote. Voter turnout, Khalida Parveen notes has also increased substantially in the recent elections as the villagers have realised, they have a means of influencing local politics. "I have no doubt that soon they will be bringing their demands to the local politicians" she said smiling "after all they know it is their right."

She also relates, "The men would often wonder and grow suspicious, as they were not used to their women leaving their homes, let alone twice a month to go to meetings with other women. It seemed strange, but why should things remain the way they had for centuries? Soon they saw that the topics being discussed were reasonable and in their own interests. In fact, once they were told how to prevent illnesses such as tuberculosis, they would accompany their women and children to the vaccinations themselves, so you see change is possible."

One cannot face an enemy one is not aware of, nor use tools that one does not understand. To explain basic rights to people is a mission that Khalida Parveen is excited to fulfil.



Joint Development Committee (JDC), are meant to create a platform for communities to interact with local authorities and make them aware of their community needs. The JDC is comprised of the head of all government line departments at the district and representation from the Local Support Organisations and SRSO. The JDC is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner.

The importance of a JDC can be established in the case of accessing government services such as schools. Hafeeza, a leader in LSO Fateh, explains the problem, "Here there are not a lot of schools in villages. Some don't even have a primary school. No one has a transport facility as most families are labourers or work in the fields. With wild animals around, we could not let our children travel far for schools, so we need schools in every village. There is a hospital built nearby, centrally located for the





entire union council, but it does not have any staff or facilities. It has been six months, but it is still not operational. We went to the District Commissioner (DC) – the chairperson of the JDC to get this hospital operational, but the DC is transferring soon so he said he cannot do anything about it. We have not given up and hope to go in the next JDC, when there will be a new DC to bring this up. In fact, we have even more demands planned. We hope to ask for a primary school in one of the nearby villages as well as a road to this same village.”

The JDC meeting that Hafeeza mentions happens twice a year in Larkana at the DC's office. In rural Sindh, people do believe that their sons require an education. However, reluctance usually arises with female education, as girls will drop out of school if the school is far or when they hit the age of adolescent. Therefore, Hafeeza claims that female education remains one of the most important topics under discussion in these JDC meetings.

JDCs allow a line of dialogue to be established between the people and the government. It is essential for these villagers to express their needs and for the government to acknowledge them and provide the needed support.





PEOPLE BEHIND SUCCESS





Back in the day, Khalida, being a Social Organiser (SO) would thrive on the fast pace and the stress of her early field visits. Ever since Khalida joined Sindh Rural Support Programme (SRSO) as an SO in December 2016, she has ventured into the remote areas of Ratodero in Larkana, Sindh, willing to take the risk and shoulder the burdens of living there as a working woman. Throughout her visits Khalida could see the despair and indifference of the people. She tried to probe deeper, trying to make them overcome their difficulties. However, she was only met with resentment. This did not surprise Khalida, for she had handled worse from her own family.

Khalida's life seemed to change dramatically after her marriage. She could not continue her education after intermediate and soon was blessed with a daughter and a

son. Even though she had married into a financially secure family, Khalida struggled as the family business started to go into a loss. "There were times when we could not even afford to feed our children taking a toll on our physical and mental health," expressed Khalida wandering into a deep thought.

She could not see her young children suffer and without any second thought Khalida immediately made up her mind to work. She worked in houses as a caretaker and also stitched clothes as tailor, but none of these jobs were financially secure enough.

After a while Khalida's struggle and hard work got her a place in SRSO. Soon she was off to attend a 15 days training course at the head office in Sukkur. "It was difficult at first leaving my children behind," she asserted but she was

adamant not to feel weak or terrified, knowing a brighter future waited for her.

Her decision to seek employment was not appreciated by her in-laws and brothers. Even her husband had initially refused to let her work. “Is that what you want for our children”? Khalida would question her husband, “to live miserably and starve?” To which her husband had no answer. She could feel her community's 'gaze' on her whenever SRSO's car picked her up for field-work or training. She knew quite well that her every move was being deeply scrutinised and that she was becoming the 'talk of the town'.

However, every morning, without paying any heed she would continue her arduous journey and today the same neighbours look up to her. Whenever exhaustion or stress makes Khalida consider quitting her job, her husband says, “It has become an obligation on you now”. With a heartier laugh she continued, “He also says that the work I do is equal to *Ibadat* (praising Allah)”. Now when she comes tired from her job, Khalida's husband even cooks for her and makes sure she gets proper rest.

Her children go to the best school in town and her fridge never goes out of food for her children. Life is not a safe journey and the roads are full of perils but “only a pure heart is required to accomplish one's dream,” expressed Khalida.



Salma is a tall and slender woman who possesses an exceptional strength to handle dire situations. She has an unflagging conviction that life is not always a bed of roses, especially if you are a woman and her refusal to admit defeat will bewilder many people.

Belonging from a poor family who gave away their daughters in marriage at as early of an age as 12, Salma knew that her life was going to be difficult. "I would admire the girls going to schools and colleges. Wondering why I was born into a poor family? It all just infuriated me so much," shares Salma agitatedly.

Her vision and passion to work contrasted with that of the people of her area and unfortunately her own family too. "My father has always been against the notion of educating girls, whereas my mother has always fought for educating us. It was not his

fault though" pronounces Salma "as my uncles would pressure him, as did the rest of society". Due to her unconventional ambitions of becoming an independent and educated woman, her father treated her like a stranger. Some days with his cold behaviour and at other times by considering her marriage proposals, Salma's father would try to stop her from what she wanted to achieve. "Even the thought of getting married would haunt me," uttered Salma, as she knew very clearly that she would not be allowed to continue her studies let alone start a job once she got married.

Defying all odds and with her mother's relentless encouragement Salma somehow managed to get an MA Sociology degree. Slowly and gradually she stepped into professional life, accepting jobs and making linkages with



professionals in her field. This not only gave her a sense of independence but now she was also financially supporting her parents. She laughs now reminiscing the old times, as at the start of her job Salma planned to quit simply because she was baffled by using a smartphone, which was necessary for data operations. Whenever life got in the way of her goals, she instead learned to be resilient. “Look at me now, I go into the field every other day and have become an expert at operating this 'Android' software” expressed Salma.

Salma with some of her colleagues has also managed to open a tuition centre in Dokri, Larkana, taking care of all the expenditures on their own, paying the rent and salaries to the teachers. This is surely not part of her current job description, but she feels obligated to help people in every way possible.

Salma's mother must have been ecstatic to how far her daughter had come. Unfortunately her mother had a stroke, paralysis followed and she is now confined to a bed. “Wherever I am today, it's all because of her efforts,” expressed Salma with teary eyes.

All it takes to achieve one's dreams is to advance confidently in that direction. Learning over time to face hurdles and gather courage is necessary, Salma has never even shared her unfortunate field incidences with her family. Those who were once a source of criticism are now the same people who carefully consider Salma's opinions and consult her in times of need. Marvelling at her intelligence and resoluteness, the people of her village regard her highly now. With each small step towards achieving her ambitions, Salma has become an inspiration for all.





Team Leader (TL)

Jamal Mustafa Shoro

Larkana

Jamal Mustafa Shoro sits in the Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) of the SUCCESS programme housed in SRSO Complex Sukkur, Sindh. He explains his first interaction with SRSO, recalling “I was the Director of the Programme Monitoring Unit at Sindh Growth and Rural Revitalisation Programme [SGRRP] where Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme [UCBPRP] was housed. I used to conduct frequent monitoring visits to the programme areas and interacted with organised women leaders of these community institutions, which was highly inspiring. After a year and half, I was offered to work in SRSO which I gladly accepted as I realised that real and substantial change in the lives of the rural community can only be achieved through social mobilisation by organising the poor. This change cannot be realised by merely writing on poverty

issues and making grand speeches in seminars and conferences”.

In reply to a question about his experience in the SUCCESS programme, he shared “I became part of SUCCESS from its very inception, which included the initial visit by EUD and subsequent formulation mission in 2014”. He further adds that “SUCCESS adopted UCBPRP model which was implemented by SRSO in Shikarpur and Kashmore Districts as a pilot and expanded into Jacobabad and Tharparkar Districts later through SRSO and TRDP respectively”.

Discussing the most important aspect of the SUCCESS programme, Jamal shares that “organising households represented by women into three-tiered community institutions and building the capacity of these community leaders is the heart of the programme”. Jamal Shoro

further adds “You know poverty cannot be reduced with the provision of money alone to the people. A number of projects were launched by government and non-governmental organisations, however, the problem persisted. To address poverty, Chairman SRSO has repeatedly claimed that we must see where poverty lies? Poverty exists at the household level, therefore, it needs to be addressed there. Hence, RSPs role is to organise households first”. Clearly, poverty doesn't end in a day, it requires continuous effort, therefore, forming organisations of the poor is the foundation of the programme. The programme cannot achieve its objectives until the community takes ownership and responsibility of the activities, such as encouraging savings, identifying honest leaders and carrying out regular meetings.

Sharing the challenges that he faced, he says “the geographical spread of the districts especially Kambar Shahdadkot is difficult to manoeuvre. We have over 1000 settlements where the total number of households are less than 10 which was very difficult to cluster into COs and VO. The second challenge is that settlements that have more than 1000 households

become difficult to organise, especially as revenue villages. These revenue villages are part of small towns such as Badh, Warrah, Naodero, Naseerabad etc. The third challenge in social mobilisation was to organise households in three union councils where the community especially men are religiously influenced and reluctant to allow women to take part in activities”.

Further he mentions that “in terms of providing interventions like Community Investment Fund, Income Generating Grants and Community Physical Infrastructure we faced external challenges. Community institutions are supposed to be legal entities to access these interventions through the process of sub-granting. However, it proved to be difficult to open bank accounts for these community institutions. This preoccupied our initial two years and delayed interventions that we had planned. If that had gone efficiently, we might have had better impact on those communities which were initially reluctant to be organised, but after witnessing the benefits of the interventions in organised communities be more willing to join the programme”.

Jamal Shoro then began discussing the challenges that were faced with regards to TVST. “The TVST component was designed in a way that poor households were provided vocational and technical skills trainings, allowing them to improve their existing skills to generate higher incomes. However, due to the accreditation condition in the financing agreement, we were compelled to hire training institutions to provide accredited trainings. This led to a long procurement process, delaying the activities of this intervention as well. Secondly, it is expected that these trained females and males are linked to the market, however, our primary audience are poor households that have a poverty score between 0-23 and are largely women, making it harder to connect them to markets”.

When questioned about the sustainability of the programme, Jamal Shoro believes “it is imbedded in the very approach of the programme i.e. three-tiered social mobilisation. Additionally, Community Investment Fund provides sustenance to these community institutions. The CIF gives purpose to these Community Institutions to provide financial assistance

to their members without depending on any external support. The linkages with government line departments to access services such as education, health, water and sanitation as well as immunisations are of the utmost importance to address the multiple dimensions of poverty. For this, the role of Joint Development Committees is highly critical which provides a platform to both government line departments mandated to ensure services delivery, as well as representatives of the communities through the LSO Network – the recipient of these services. This needs to be further strengthened through law making and changes in business rules which provide legal basis to this 'Social Pillar' in terms of sharing the communities needs identified through Village Development Plan/Union Council Development Plans and accessing government resources for these identified needs”.

On a personal note, Jamal Shoro is highly excited and proud to be part of SRSO and to lead such an impactful programme like SUCCESS which directly provides him an opportunity to interact and engage with the community to which he belongs.

LARKANA 2016-18



121,019

Households Covered by
Poverty Scorecard Survey



61,254

Organised
Households



3,276

Women Community
Organisations (COs) Formed



478

Women Village
Organisations (VOs) Formed



30

Women Local Support
Organisations (LSOs) Formed



5,911

Women CO Members
who received CMST



983

Women VO/LSO Members
who received LMST



282

Community Resource
Persons (CRPs) Trained



28

LSOs/VOs with Community
Investment Fund (CIF)



1,279

Households Benefiting
from CIF



98 million

Amount of CIF (PKR) given to
LSOs/VOs



7,676
Women Insured



8,499
Men Insured



43,845
Children Insured



25
Community Physical Infrastructures
(CPIs) Completed



16 million
Cost of CPIs (PKR)



4,878
Households benefiting
from CPIs



7,713
Households Insured through
Micro Health Insurance



298
Beneficiaries of Technical and
Vocational Skills Training (TVST)



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