



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

## RSPs' Annual Strategy Retreat

January 19–20, 2023



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## Overview

Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) hosted a two-day RSPs' Annual Strategy Retreat on January 19–20, 2023, at Pearl Continental Hotel, Bhurban Muree. The Retreat was organised to provide a platform for the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) to share their experiences, review strategic aspects of RSPN and RSPs' work and reflect on the way forward - for consolidated, enhanced and strategic efforts for addressing and overcoming the impacts of climate change. The retreat serves as a forum for strategic coordination, experience sharing, networking, and highlighting of new initiatives of the RSPs.

Senior Advisor Climate change and Biodiversity, Ms Aban Marker Kabraji, Mr Sheraz Ashraf, Office of Financial Management at USAID, Mr Zain Mustafa, Founder of Indus River Valley Institute, RSPN Board Members, senior management of RSPN, Chief Executive Officers and senior management of RSPs attended the event. During the event, all participants have an opportunity to review key strategic aspects of the RSP programmes focusing on community empowerment, Climate Change and poverty alleviation, as well as to interact with each other.

Since RSPN is coming to the end of two generously funded EU programmes, hence the lessons and impacts of the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (SUCCESS) and the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRACE) were shared with the retreat participants. RSPN has conducted studies (internally and externally done) and numerous lesson-learning exercises to identify key lessons and impacts of BRACE and SUCCESS interventions. These interventions are also carried out by RSPs in other provinces, through other programmes. The Programme Managers of SUCCESS and BRACE discussed the lessons learnt and the future of similar programmes.

## Day One

The session started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Ms Feroza Zahra, M&E Officer SUCCESS and DafPak, RSPN. The event participants introduced themselves and Mr Sajjad Changezi, Program Manager BRACE, introduced those who had joined the retreat remotely.

### Welcome Note and Objective of the RSPs Annual Strategy Retreat

Mr Sajjad Hussain Changezi commenced the proceedings of the Retreat by quoting Allama Iqbal's definition of leadership, that a leader is one who is visionary, holds convincing power and always remains him/herself first in the line before everybody.

نگہ بلند، سخن دل نواز، جاں پرسوز،  
یہی ہے رختِ سفر میرِ کارواں کے لیے

Mr Sajjad Hussain Changezi invited Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman Rural Support Programmes Network for the opening remarks.

### Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman Rural Support Programmes Network:



"I have really nothing new to say because I have been saying this so many times that all of you have heard it again and again. Just to recount how I reached where I am. Of these 70 years, in which I have been working, I have devoted 40 years to Rural Support Programmes. In 1982, I was invited to initiate the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme; I was working with United Nations at that time. I really was not very shocked because I should really need to leave the UN job and go to this new venture of which I had no idea what I was supposed to do. Obviously, His Highness the Aga Khan had written a letter to the executive director of UNICEF James Grant, so I agreed to a five-year

deputation from UNICEF to AKRSP and stayed there for twelve years. In fact, after five years of deputation, I resigned and I got a message from Mr James Grant that he would like to come and visit AKRSP and here he spent two days for what I was doing. He said to me that I just came to find out why did you resign from UNICEF seeing what you are doing, if were in your place I would have done the same. Fortunately, for me, this was really an opportunity of a lifetime. Because firstly the support that I got and I remember my first meeting with His Highness Aga Khan where the chairman of the board was also present, he turned around to me and said, "This is my programme and you have my permission to approach me any time if you come across any difficulty". Anyway, I have never come across any such situation because Bob Shaw in Geneva always used to take care of any problems that I used to face. I took the challenge of implementing AKRSP because I had learnt the theory of Rural Development from my mentor Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, what he used to call the principles of the subsistence holders in development and he would really emphasise that these are as precise as the law of gravity and that you cannot deviate from these principles. Very simply he said that individually the poor cannot be helped and they have to be organised. Without organisation that will be impossible to reach each household.

Secondly, you must believe that each one even the poorest man and woman has the potential to rise above the level of subsistence. It is all a matter of how you identify that and especially what are the problems, what are the difficulties, why they are not able to unleash their potentials”.

He said that obviously, unless the people are organised, it is not possible to do anything for them and they are the ones who really know what they can do and why they are not able to do it.

Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan shared, “I was very happy when the fifth year of AKRSP when the World Bank's first evaluation team OED came in 1987 and evaluated AKRSP. I was really happy with the report they sent that the first four years of AKRSP are the missed four years of all rural development programmes in the world because they adopted a blueprint approach unlike AKRSP's process approach asking the people what they can do, and why they are not able to do it”.

He added, “So this really was a great encouragement that I kept on getting while implementing AKRSP and the main thing was that the World Bank came again after ten years to evaluate. They said in real terms the income of the people has more than doubled”.

He said that obviously, the success of AKRSP depended on the willingness of the community, and not only willingness but finding a leader and honest and competent leader in them. In fact, they were those activists of the community and their organisation that needed the support of very dedicated people, who believed in their potential. “I must say that I was very lucky in getting the wonderful CEOs and staff I found who were able to do anything”, Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan expressed.

He further added that when AKRSP replication began, the first one was the Sarhad Rural Support Programme and followed by National Rural Support Programme and Sindh Rural Support Programme and Baluchistan Rural Support Programme. Unfortunately, the Punjab rural support programme followed a different path. They did not believe what he was saying, and they wanted to do it their own way. Obviously, they could not do really much and fortunately, the NRSP was working in that area so he did not feel any difficulty with it.

He mentioned, “Another thing, which we needed, was a training wing, and I was happy that right from the beginning, initially with the NRSP they had the potential of the rural management and the rural management did so well. In fact, they had a building where all the RSPs were accommodated. So with so many RSPs, there was a need for a network, so in 2001, the RSPs formed their own network called Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and there again it was not a question of creating a network, it was a question of finding a person who would really run the network. That is where I was lucky to find the CEO, who has been running it since then. That is what I always tell my colleagues whether you want to expand or you want to replicate, the secret is finding the right kind of persons to really replicate people that you do not replicate programmes”.

## **Session I: Climate Change and Biodiversity**

CEO RSPN Ms Shandana Humayun Khan

Ms Shandana Humayun Khan welcomed the guests and ran through the logic of the agenda and the reason why climate change is being discussed. She said, “A larger reason is which direction are we going in, I find that we often do projects because projects come in and money comes in, but what is the long-term plan on this? If you look at climate change a lot of work has been done since the beginning, we were just talking about IUCN's collaboration with AKRSP, the hydropower work, infrastructure work and a bit of limited agricultural work that is specific due to climate change. Bits and pieces are there, but how do we put it all together and how do we build internal capacities to strategies”.

Ms Shandana encouraged the guests to speak freely and to give their ideas. Moreover, the open session allowed the audience/ guests to discuss the things, which are not on the agenda. Ms Shandana Khan said,

“There are programmes we are doing which are important and which require scale-up, which have an underline impact on everything we do. One of those programmes is family planning and there is very little emphasis on that. A very little emphasis by the government. The narrative is absent.

A conversation with and presentation on The Living Indus framework by Ms Aban Marker Kabraji. Senior Advisor Climate Change and Biodiversity. The Triple Planetary Crisis. UN Development Coordination, Office for Asia-Pacific (UNDCO), Bangkok



The living Indus Programme;

“Based on my discussion with Shandana, I came here to have a conversation with all of you on climate change and biodiversity. It is a vast subject. We are talking about planetary crises, future human responsibility, and about what mess human beings created. In order to make that a little less intimidating, I thought I focus a little bit on global governance, climate and biodiversity today. Then really focusing on how it is relevant to the work you do. That means the political boundaries of

Pakistan and it's geography, and what is happening in the geography. So that is the basis of which I am having the discussion and obviously presenting any particular part if you think we should go down in more detail please feel free to do that” Ms Aban stated.

She started the discussion with a little bit of global governance that today determines what happened to climate and biodiversity. She shared that back in the 1970s, there held a conference UN in terms of the inter-documentary forum in which four countries did participate, and that is the conference from where the discussion on the environment began. It was the beginning of the conceptual understanding of the environment and the sustainable development came out of a certain ecosystem approach. How does it naturally work ownership?

That was the conference then made eventually to what happened in Rio, which was known as UN Conference on Environment and Development. In 1992, from Rio were born two conventions "The Climate Change Convention" and "The Biological Diversity Convention". These two conventions today determine what nation-states are required to do in terms of their targets in meeting climate targets and in biodiversity. Much of the work done by any organisation within the country is situated within that legal framework. The legal framework of climate change and the legal framework of biodiversity convention.

She expressed that the governments are meant to maintain their national development plans meeting those targets. What else came out of that Rio Convention was the Global Environmental Financing clause, which is the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) that came out subsequently from Cancun. These are the two global findings. While looking at development assistance for Climate Change and Biodiversity, these are the two big global clauses that one should look to access. One has to access them through the government but they are currently the most obvious sources of financing for anything relevant to the environment.

She explained that one of the objectives of the United Nations is to try to frame a country's response in terms of climate crises. That is a combination of a response to climate, biodiversity and population. Every country needs to frame their response. In the case of Pakistan, discussions with the government and work has been done on two aspects, one is the geography and the other is the thematic, which is the natural resources theme. In geography, one usually looks at what are the big ecosystems on which a country depends for its survival. Moreover, in terms of theme, one looks at what is the big theme, that natural resources on which a country depends, is it the forest, the oceans, or is it water, what is? In Pakistan, the

themes emerged as water and the geography emerged as the Indus. The Indus is the life system for Pakistan. Without the Indus River, this country will not exist in the shape and form it does today.

She further expressed that if we look at the statics, 90% of the people of Pakistan and its economy resides in the Indus Basin, its water irrigates more than 80% of its arable land and most of the cities are dependent on the Indus for their survival and their continuous progress. The survival of the Indus is very much at stake, depending on how we manage it. Pakistan is among the top ten countries most vulnerable to climate change its contribution to climate change is less than 1 %.

She stated, “It means that we really are not in a position to do very much about the impact of climate on us today. The main contributors take those decisions to the emissions of the climate, which are the United States and China. We can do very little about that except in the global consensus that takes place at the climate conventions and biodiversity conventions every year. What we can do is adapt to what is happening and what is going to happen in Pakistan. We need to identify what that pattern is, what that trend is, and how we move into what is known as areas of adaptation. We saw it a few months ago in the floods; these are direct results of the impact of climate on Pakistan today. Flooding is going to become more frequent, it is going to become more unpredictable and we are going to go through cycles of floods at this point in the time the most we can do is try to take protections that one can foresee and adopt them. That's essentially the message that one needs to bring forward and obviously you play an enormously important part in the adaptation strategies you bring to the communities and bring to the programmes of geography”.

Ms Aban explained, “The Living Indus Initiative flows from two sources, one is the poor health of the Basin; its ecosystems are under pressure from the seemingly inexorable changing climate, temperature fluctuations and the disruption of rainfall patterns. The second is if you talk to anybody and we have a fair mutual consensus and discussions including with yourselves in your representative provinces over the last year. This resonates with everyone. There is no belief who disagrees with the fact that this is a high priority for Pakistan”.

Living Indus is an umbrella initiative and a call to action to lead and consolidate initiatives to restore the ecological health of the Indus within the boundaries of Pakistan. She mentioned, “Therefore, we had extensive consultations with the public sector, private sector, experts, and civil society led to a ‘living’ menu of 25 preliminary interventions and it's a big programme. We are talking about relapsing the architectural water in Pakistan, the floodplain of the big Indus basin. We are talking therefore a vast sum of money and people are aware of this, it was put forward in the developer conference that took place on the 9th of January in Geneva and it is going forward as one of the programmes. Therefore, in terms of getting high-level support from all the ministries we had then how it is going to be the challenge. Twenty interventions have to do with livelihood, biodiversity, and groundwater”.

She explained that the recent floods have such a massive impact today in Pakistan and the water ministry fully understands this issue. “It is because we essentially changed the flood plain of the Indus by the kind of urban settlements and irrigation patterns that have been put in place over the last hundred years. As a result, the damage of the floods and the impacts of the floods is entirely due to in a sense the management or the mismanagement of the natural flows of the water. Therefore, what Indus’s strategy tries to do is look at what those natural flow patterns will be in future. In addition, to adopt our irrigation systems and our agricultural patterns to the management” Ms Aban added.

The government as priority has chosen the top eight out of these 25 interventions. Which are Green Infrastructure for Flood Control and Groundwater Recharge, 100,000 Community Ponds, Sustainable Groundwater Governance through Provincial Water Acts, Nature-Based Resilient Agriculture, and Indus Clean-up: Industrial and Urban Effluent Treatment, Salinity Control in the Lower Indus, climate Resilience on the Indus Delta and Sustainable Aquaculture and Fisheries Management.



## Session II: Lessons from Core EU Funded Programmes in Sindh (SUCCESS) and Balochistan (BRACE)

Lessons and Impacts of the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (SUCCESS) – Presenter Fazal Ali Saadi, Programme Manager SUCCESS, RSPN



Mr Fazal Ali Saadi Programme Manager of SUCCESS explained that there are some key learnings, which are also relevant to the core programmes of the RSPs, especially the element of sustainability of the community institutions, CIF and linkages with the government departments.

He shared a bit of the programme's history and values that matter. SUCCESS is among the recent initiatives that have emerged from the experiences of Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan in Pakistan (Particularly in Sindh) and neighbouring countries (Including India). Social mobilisation and poverty reduction are the bases of this programme. The EU funds it and it started based on the success of the programme implemented by the government of Sindh called the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme when they approached Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan and RSPN. It shared the programme and its success. It also incorporates many interventions, which are mostly household-based interventions for poverty graduation tried and tested by RSPs through DFID, IFAD or PPF. Overall, the approach is empowering the people and in Sindh SUCCESS is mainly focusing on only women's organisations.

Therefore, the main objective of the programme was to graduate the poor out of poverty and increase their access to social services especially public services and women's empowerment was one of the key objectives.

The total budget was EUR 80 Million and the duration of the implementation was 6.5 years. It started in February 2016 and ended in June 2022. It was implemented through the EU's funding in eight districts of Sindh and the implementing partners were National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) which implemented the programme in four districts, and Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) implemented the programme interventions in two districts and the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) implemented the programme in two districts.

However, the commitment was also that the EU funding will cover one-third of the districts and the government of Sindh will cover the rest. The Sindh government has been implementing in twelve districts. Therefore, the overall districts are twenty. The latest update is that four districts are approved and the government of Sindh is trying to implement there soon.

The total number of households in the eight districts of SUCCESS in 2016 was 850,000, which was identified through the survey of the poverty scorecard (PSC). Out of those, the number of poorest households was 475,000, which is 56%. The programme offered three-tiered social mobilisation that is Community Organisations (COs) at the Muhalla level, Village Organisations (VOs) at the village level and Local Support Organisations (LSOs) at the Union Council level. Through these organisations, 72% of

households were covered in those eight districts. 90% of the overall poorest households, which have PSC 0-23, have been organised.

Every poor member of the CO prepared Micro Investment Plan (MIP) based on that the poorest households having the PS from 0-12 were given Income Generating Grants (IGG) on average, and the number of IGGs given was 17,300. Moreover, those who could take interest-free loans or with minimum service charges were given Community Investment Funds (CIFs) through the LSOs. The amount on average was 20,000 and was 50,000 maximum. Households having PSC 0-23 were given Technical and Vocational Training (TVST). The purpose of these three interventions was to improve the income of the households. 25% of the poorest (PSC 0-12, starting from the lowest score) were provided with Micro Health Insurance (MHI). Premium/Coverage was PKR 25,000 per year per family member for hospitalisation costs.

Each VO is provided with a grant for community physical infrastructure (CPI) which were mainly for clean drinking water, irrigation, Link roads and sanitation. Moreover, the component of enterprise grants and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills training was added to the components of the programme.

### KEY LESSONS – SOCIAL MOBILISATION

- Social mobilisation proved to be an effective tool in improving community's access to information, public services, perception about women involvement in civic engagement, increasing household incomes, assets and improved poverty scores. However, the impact on poor households having leadership positions is higher than, only CO members.
- Despite a decent number of activities undertaken by the LSOs with government line departments and RSPs, the true potential of the community institution network remains untapped. Though the CDLD policy is developed, the implementation lacked the attention of the TA team and government for formalising government and LSO linkages.
- Either policy level changes in the form of Parliamentary Act (PA) or Administrative Directives from the highest level (CM) needed to provide the regular services or supplies of government line departments through LSOs to the poor households.

### KEY LESSONS – VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Fazal Ali Saadi explained that social mobilisation proved to be an effective tool in improving the community's access to information, and public services, perception of women's involvement in civic engagement, increasing household incomes, and assets and improving poverty scores. However, the impact on poor households having leadership positions is higher than those who were only CO members.

All 314 LSOs have been able to undertake around 1000 activities through developing linkages with the government departments. Moreover, there is enough realisation in the government departments as well

### ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS (0-23) RECEIVING HOUSEHOLD LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

Number of Org HHs (PSC 0-23)	% of poor organised households receiving SUCCESS Intervention (June 2022)				
	CIF	IGG	TVST	MHI	EDG
426,328	27.8	15.1	10.2	32.3	1.0

	IGG +CIF	IGG + TVST	IGG+ MHI	CIF+TVST	IGG+ CIF+ TVST	IGG+CIF+TVST+M HI
Number of HHs	8,453	6,441	36,858	16,264	10,485	15,636
% of PSC (0-23) households	2.0	1.5	8.6	3.8	2.5	3.7

and wherever they need the assistance of the communities, especially for the immunisation campaign, or voter registration they consult LSOs, however, it needed formal processes. Despite a decent number of activities undertaken by the LSOs with government line departments and RSPs, the true potential of the community institution network remains untapped. Though the CDLD policy is developed, the implementation lacked the attention of the TA team and government for formalising government and LSO linkages.

Either policy level changes in the form of a Parliamentary Act (PA) or Administrative Directives from the highest level (CM) needed to provide the regular services or supplies of government line departments through LSOs to the poor households.

He shared that there are two challenges in this; one is that in Pakistan, dollars have their own policies and the government has adopted it. In terms of the TVET, the focus is to either train those who have a certain level of education and could do certification and with that certificate, they would be able to find a job in the market. The issue is that in the targeted districts of the SUCCESS programme, 92% of the adults who have PSC from 0-23 were not literate. Moreover, many of the women have mobility issues and they cannot go out of their villages. Therefore, the target group could not fall under the criteria of the TVET reform that is why the training was not relevant to this target group.

Therefore, the focus thus should be:

- **Self-employment** in the local market, identified through MIPs but keep market saturation of skills. Needs to be linked with CIF/IGG and enterprise grants for equipment and start-up capital and specific business skills training
- **Wage employment:** Only for those young educated people with less or no mobility, issues who fulfil the requirements of TVET sector approaches be identified and trained. (Market analysis, small numbers with focus on market demand, high end skills with proper selection process)

#### **KEY LESSONS – CIF/IGG**

- CIF is one of the major interventions, which helped poor households in implementing their Micro Investment Plans. It is empowering women in terms of managing and operating the CIF and increasing the assets and incomes of the poor households.
- Households receiving multiple cycle of CIF gained three time's higher income and assets than those with one time CIF. However, the challenge was that the CIF loan amount should be higher, and in the SUCCESS programme covered only 27% of the poor households. The CIF should be for every household.
- CIF and IGG only reached to 43% of the poor households. The CIF budget needs to be increased so that it reaches to each poorest household (PSC0-23) and revolves within those households until they graduate from poverty. Focus should be on poverty graduation rather than the outreach.

#### **POST PROJECT CIF MANAGEMENT**

- There are multiple models in practice by the RSPs, which have been discussed in a meeting before at RSPN. The CIF given to LSOs under the SUCCESS Programme is almost 6 million on average is there in every LSO. during the project the cost of operations and management was covered by the project, and post-project the LSOs have to manage it, and there are two challenges which are banks are not cooperating with the LSOs and the other is that it needs supervision of the RSPs.
- SRSP made CIF a part of its regular financial services, with both CIF and micro-finance managed by the Micro Finance Section of SRSP through the Village Banking Model – Micro credit cross subsidising CIF

- SRSO – UCBPRP: Some of the funds are pooled in the SRSO account and some remained with VO/LSO. Cost of operation from the SRSO endowment fund
- SRSO – PPRP: All CIF is managed from the SRSO pool account. SRSO as part of its exit strategy has proposed to the government of Sindh the following options for PPRP:
- SRSO should be allowed to take an interest rate of 14% to communities, Government of Sindh should provide a subsidy of 14% for SRSO to manage CIF, Government should provide a one-time endowment to the RSPs which will be dedicated to cover the post project cost of CIF management and sustainability,
- EU PROGRAMMES - SUCCESS and BRACE

The CIF exit strategy for both the programmes suggests handing over of the overall management and operation of CIF to the LSOs and VOs. LSO have started taking 10-12% service charges to cover its operation costs. Some LSOs facing issues with bank's non-cooperation. SRSO and NRSP continued providing support to LSOs in managing CIF. Staff costs covered through their own resources.

### **KEY LESSONS FROM THE CURRENT CIF OPERATIONS UNDER PROJECTS AND POST PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

- The sustainability and exit strategy of the CIF component should be part of the design phase of the programme and needs to include key lessons:
  - RSPs providing support to communities which includes RSP liaison with banks
  - Each RSP strategising as to how it will retain essential staff to monitor the CIF post project
- The management and operation cost of CIF post project cannot be covered from the service charges taken from the beneficiaries. A higher service charge will exclude the poor from accessing CIF and lower service charges will not cover the operation and management costs.
- The community institutions will need the support of RSPs to engage with banks.

### **WHAT IS NEXT?**

- GoS has led the way with continuing commitment to social mobilisation and poverty graduation. Implementation capacity and grass roots organisations are in place for a coordinated initiative for reducing poverty and multidimensional deprivation.
- For poverty reduction and income generation, need to give attention to:
  - 25% households graduated from PSC 0-23. These households needs to be linked with MFIs and market linkages FOR POVERTY GRADUATION
  - At least 30% of the poor in each district could not get any household level interventions (CIF/IGG/TVST) from SUCCESS/PPRP due to resource constraints. They need these interventions TO GRADUATE FROM PSC 0-23
  - 21% of the above PSC 23 at the start of SUCCESS, now fallen in PSC 0-23, as result of high inflation, COVID and economic meltdown. They need the household level interventions.
  - Livestock: Small ruminants are an important asset and source of livelihood for the target group. 82% of CIF and IGG Beneficiaries invested in livestock. Intervention for livestock diseases control, feed improvement and then bread improvement
  - Kitchen gardening and poultry rearing for women, which is particularly beneficial in terms of women's incomes and household food consumption.

- Climate-smart agriculture especially for small farmers and tenants/sharecroppers. New extension methods, particularly those using ICT.
- On the supply side: policy directive that specific government programmes that require broad-based community participation should work through community institutions fostered through social mobilisation and continue JDCs
- On the demand side: continuing presence of RSPs to facilitate linkages with government departments, sensitise them to community participation and advice and monitor community institutions and their interaction. Engage LSOs for higher-level advocacy.

## Lessons and Impacts of the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment programme (BRACE).

Presenter Sajjad Hussain Changezi, Programme Manager BRACE, RSPN



Mr Sajjad Hussain Changezi, Programme Manager BRACE shared that the BRACE Programme is targeting ten districts of Baluchistan including the districts from the North, Central Baluchistan and from South. National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) is covering the Kech district in the South and the Baluchistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) is implementing the rest of the districts. Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) is providing technical support to BRSP and NRSP. Overall, this is a 45 million Euro project, 26 million for BRSP, 6 million for NRSP and 2 million for

RSPN to provide technical support. The target was 300,000 households in order to organise them into a three-tiered structure similar to SUCCESS, community organisations (COs), Village Organisations (VOs) and Local Support Organisations (LSOs). The only difference was that all women implemented the SUCCESS Programme while in Baluchistan it was not possible; however, RSPN was able to create a consensus and make it 50% of the beneficiaries and membership of the community institutions for women. The project covered 237 Union Councils (UCs) 5660 VOs, and 2600 COs, and formed 22 LSO networks at the Tehsil level and 9 district bodies at the district level. key findings of the research study conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) show that 45% of the Income Generating Grant (IGG) beneficiaries graduated from the PSC 0-18 to 24-100 and 47% from Community Investment Fund (CIF) Beneficiaries graduated from PSC0-23 to 24-100 and 51% Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) beneficiaries graduated from PSC 0-23 to 24-100. The monthly income of the IGG beneficiaries improved to 3100, 1600 in the income of the CIF beneficiaries and 3300 in the income of TVET beneficiaries.

### Lessons Learnt:

Ms Shandana Humayun Khan shared that two lessons have come up; one is related to the CIF. Different RSPs post-project have found different solutions based on how many solutions they have to continue monitoring or actually physically managing it. Initially, the idea was that the LSOs will be incapacitated to manage and the fund will go to them. She added that there are serious reservations about the transparency of women accessing loans. Therefore, RSPs have responded in different ways, and that is the only practical way, it can be. Because if for example, TRDP says that, they do not have the resources to keep the staff to monitor this or to pool the CIF and manage the roles and that is the reality of the situation.

She said, “The second relates to this huge network of organisations that we keep saying that the government should work through them and in actual fact the government is working with them and when we say this should be formalised, I don't know if it can happen as it is a big challenge. Moreover, relating to this framework of LSOs, we really need to think upward with the LSO networks to start very strong provincial advocacy by communities. Not just by RSPs”.

Mr Rashid Bajwa, CEO of NRSP added, “One of the things which must be added is that this whole social infrastructure the CO, VO, and LSOs particularly in SUCCESS and BRACE they're going to be very vulnerable projects and we don't want that to be crumbled and the only way to sustain them is through CIF. So CIF is not important just for preserving the fund itself but it is critical to maintaining the social infrastructure which has been invested by the EU, so we have to think about out-of-the-box solutions”.

He said that how NRSP is doing is that the fund itself turns in billions of rupees now and does not go waste while at the same NRSP ensured that the LSOs and the VOs are connected with it so that they keep on doing whatever the work they are going to do. So the point is that it does not just have financial angels to it, it has a larger social mobilisation angle to it as well.

Mr Allah Nawaz explained that TRDP has a different approach to this, which is a bit different from what has already been said. TRDP has three major premises and has its own model. The first is that TRDP was the first organisation, which started along with SRSO the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme. It ended in 2015 and after 10 years TRDP is still in it and has different sorts of communications with the government of Sindh. Therefore, the post-period of ten years has a very important lesson for TRDP. So one of the three premises already said by Mr Fazal Ali Saadi that this is actually the fund of the LSO, the ownership is with the LSO, and the third was the structure on which the whole project was built. Therefore, the whole success of the SUCCESS programme is precise that this has been transferred to LSO in a way that the LSO has excellent competencies, which they will forward according to their own needs, and these needs are changing very rapidly and this is the post period. The second premise is that this amount will be out of TRDP's books of accounts. TRDP will not charge any interest, so in a way; it will be again the whole unit of the LSO. The third is that it was not microfinance of financial services in a conventional way, this was in the revolving pool on which the whole LSOs were doing different sorts of enterprises and have their own rate for these enterprises.

Mr Ghulam Rasool from SRSO reported that SRSO's learning is that the funds for the CIF are with LSOs, and the LSOs have multiple issues of accounts, management issues and literacy issues etc. that is why it is not successful and is a huge challenge.

## Plans/Perspectives of USAID in terms of Engagement with RSPs in Future:

Mr Sheraz Ashraf, Office of Financial Management at USAID



Mr Sheraz Ashraf mentioned that USAID plans its five years strategy and this year's climate is the heart of the strategy. Keeping in mind the aspect of climate resilience, USAID has changed the structure of the offices. Another element, which is included in USAID's strategy, is localisation, which means the strengthening of local organisations. By the end of the first week of Feb 2023, USAID is expecting a very senior visit from the USAID office in Washington. The gentleman who is coming is a very senior in position and fortunately, he has been to Pakistan

so he has many linkages here. His agenda includes the plans and the follow-up to thank RSPN for setting up a discussion with the activists on the floods.

Another discussion is on the green climate funds. USAID has potential resources and will try to build linkages as many as it can. In Pakistan, it includes NRSP, and JS Bank to write effective proposals and access to green climate funds and having the capacities of the global actors to write proper approvable proposals was the focus of the intervention.

Mr Sheraz Ashraf added, “There would be challenges at the government level, but as an organisation, it has such a massive outreach across the country. I think in my humble opinion it is about mindset change, as six years ago we did the assessment strengthening programme focusing on the institution's strengthening of various organisations to be more effective partners for donor assistance. We need to look at that from RSPs' perspective as well, as this climate is here to stay, so if we want to strengthen those organisations we try to explore the opportunities”.

He further expressed, “Moreover, USAID has requested RSPN to have a conversation on the green climate fund and how we see ourselves moving forward and what are the opportunities for collaboration, and strengthening each other, where synergy we can get, understanding that NRSP is the lead but are there others we can think about? Thus, my objective of coming over here was to learn what the appetite is and what the thought patterns and way forward of the RSPs are”.

### Session III: Resource Mobilisation by RSPs

Dr. Rashid Bajwa, CEO NRSP



Mr Rashid Bajwa started his presentation with a question according to the audience, what are the three strategies for resource mobilisation?

#### Resources of Non-Profits

He elaborated, “In the case of non-profits, different kinds of resources are available, such as free-to-use resources. This is very important; this is money through grants or retained earnings or endowments. Then there are financial resources that are tied, which are project finances. Project financing we did in

BRACE and SUCCESS, were the tied projects. Then there is this consulting/advising, which organisations use. In-kind donations, like in Akhwat getting many in-kind contributions, Edhi trust, so these are some of the resource tools, which are there”.

He further explained what non-profits do for resource mobilisation. He said that they submit proposals to a donor agency and organise fundraising events where they invite guests and request donations for their organisations. Moreover, some of them have donation boxes, best example is again Akhwat's client to whom it gives loans has a donation box where they keep the small amounts of money received from the public.

Moreover, collect in-kind contributions such as used clothes, furniture, books, vehicles or even buildings. NRSP had also received used vehicles. Another important thing is volunteer support where volunteers provide their time and resources to support the work of the organisation. Most important is the income from business-oriented projects like selling publications, offering consultancies, microfinancing and micro insurance and micro-enterprise-based activities.

The resource mobilisation process is very simple but it is very important. The process starts with resource mapping, which needs a landscape chart, then requires donor mapping, donor approach, obtaining resources and lastly the evaluation. There are certain roles and responsibilities for everyone within the organisation. First is the board of directors or board of trustees, who network with potential donors and implementing partners, and networking becomes critical at that level. Providing leadership and input to strategic plan activities. In addition, represent the organisation at high-level functions etc. then comes the Managing Directors/CEO/Exec. Directors manage the resources, supervise business development/proposal development, manage relationships with the government, provide leadership and input to strategic planning activities, inform about the news and represent the organisation at the highest levels.

In the third level, comes the senior Managers, whom they have to contribute to the proposal development, monitor it, represent the organisation at local functions, and provide leadership and input to strategic planning activities. Then comes the Program staff and field staff, they have to maintain awareness of what donor implementations partners are looking for, and then maintain a relationship with local government and communities.

Last but not least is the finance staff; they have to contribute to the budget development and financial projections.

Every person in the organisation/ In the RSP will have to take a role and responsibility according to where they stand. He mentioned while explaining the Strengths of RSPs, “Thanks to Shoaib Sb, he has actually brought in Endowments. He said that every RSP has an endowment and it just has been because of his assistance. For continuity, endowments must be considered "sacred" and untouchable. It cannot be used for anything, except safe yet high-yielding profits”.

He further explained, “If you are just dependent upon endowments, it is not a bad thing because of the high yielding rates. It was 5% previously, which is now 16.5%. Any investment, which RSPs want to do for any enterprise, must come from their "retained" earnings”.

The best-case scenario is to be aggressive in getting projects. More important thing is that the projects must be linked because these projects will help all social infrastructure, will also help the RSPs, and will be safe provided RSPs deliver on time, show quality outcomes and create some retained earnings. The project, running after project and getting projects is the best-case scenario for RSPs to resource mobilisation.

He said while explaining how to win projects, “The first important question is do we have a focal person like BA (Bashir Anjum) who does capture work? He single-handedly has been following things nobody knew. He was always ahead of everybody else who knew. This is what the US jargon "Capture Work" is. We need these Bashir Anjums of this world in every RSP. The second more important thing is attending these workshops and seminars not as passive listeners but for networking. The networking opportunity at workshops and seminars is tremendous”.

Another important thing is “Do we have a proposal writing team and where is it placed? This team generally should be directly under the CEO. It should have strong people. Moreover, do we have sufficient ability to do policy advocacy and networking? While maintaining an arm’s length between us and the policymakers,” Mr Rashid Bajwa added.

Thus, these are some of the recipes for the RSPs on how to win the projects. Another important thing is that we have to look for the worst-case scenario. Hence, every head of the organisation must look at the worst-case scenario of what happens if there is no SUCCESS, there is no BRACE, and there is nothing. The lesson is that we have to have backup plans and we must question whether can we live within the endowment, which has been provided through Shoaib Sb. Can any organisation live within the endowment and how can it do that? The second is can we do belt tightening? Are we willing to do belt tightening?



He added, “Enterprise development must touch the social infrastructure which we have created, doing business is not good. Accordingly, if you want to do it for profit, do not touch your endowment, bring money from somewhere else and the second most important thing is it must touch the lives of the people with whom you work. With these two principles, you can do the value chain and micro equity. These are the two major areas.

He shared a great way to add income, based on the experiences, the endowment is not touched and able to bring in equity partners and have an impact on our communities

**Caution note:** “The world out there is very hostile and competitive so one has to have a niche idea. In addition, if you want to follow up the same thing, which the private sector is already doing you, are gone. Moreover, you must hire appropriate expertise and lastly it has to be an arm's length between the RSP and the entity”.

## Session IV: Resistance to Resilience – Architecture and Mental Health

Mr. Zain Mustafa, Founder of Indus River Valley Institute - includes housing rehabilitation, post flood



Mr Zain Mustafa stated, “When we say we work with heritage sites, we mean that we work with the communities residing around the heritage sites. What their economic needs are. It is always done in a very below the radar, casual and informal manner. So the focus always remains on the building, but when we go there, we learn about what their needs are. Inevitably, in a strange automatic and organic manner whoever, I take with me to the heritage site learns about the history and really understands our own individual relationship to the earth we stand on,

the land that is given rise to the buildings, the land that has given rise to our identities or cultures. These people are living museums to tell us about the things that books do not tell us. We talk to the communities about what can they do themselves, we talk about ownership, ownership of the poverty, ownership of the patriarchy, land, ownership of all their miseries, and we provide support. Thus, in the same way, a pilot project takes me to Dadu. The project is resistant to resilience architecture & mental health. People often wonder what the connection of mental health here is. Without the right mindset, without mega and micro-narrative it is all about mindset. Our relationship and our minds to those people, their relationship and their minds to themselves to their land, to the water. Now the narrative of the relationship with the water is going to have to change. So in this project several private donors approached me and asked me if I can give a creative, imaginative, innovative solution, as we keep seeing the shelters going up, we keep seeing this crisis management happening. What else can be provided to the people that is sustainable, that is eco-friendly and indigenous, and appropriate to the culture, the people and their lifestyles”.

Mr Mustafa reported that they are training the locals learning from them, engaging with them, and understanding their mindset, desperation, and their desire. They have discovered two points where they are resistant to any kind of change because they are so unstable and their cultural ecosystem and their mental ecosystem are so fragile, fractured and fragmented that they do not want to leave their comfort zone. He mentioned, “We worked with Dr Ayesha and her team in Karachi to understand the battle that was happening in their minds and the minds of the teenagers who are busy making TikToks finding

entertainment in their own misery. It is a very dark and sad space to be in. so you have to come down and make them believe that you genuinely care and that is the hard work to buy that mindset, a space of trust. They were living in swamps”.



Mr Mustafa showed this picture and said it is more relevant to mental health. One of these boys survived. One boy survived because he grabbed all of the rope and he took a chance, so this entire project is about that split second. His mental health gave him the strength the courage, and the belief in that risk that this is his best option. It takes a fraction of a second; in that fraction, the other boys lost their lives.

“Our project on mental health lies in that fraction of a second; to go into these people's minds and understand what that turning point is”, Zain Mustafa added.

## Session VI: SWOT of RSPN

Group Work on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) of RSPN.  
To end with the Way Forward for RSPN Moderator: Shandana Khan, CEO RSPN

For SWOT of RSPN, the participants of the event were divided into five groups, and they came up with the following points.

### Strengths:

In the initial discussion, it was discussed that the networking of the RSPs is very strong, and project management is very good, whenever a new project has been implemented the documentation, reporting manual, knowledge management, and dissemination are very up-to-date. It highlights the strengths and achievements of RSPs' work. Its present RSPs and the platform for RSPs some donors prefer RSPN as a one-window operation for project one or two RSPs. Moreover, RSPs are on the board of RSPN and RSPN implements the project through RSPs through a resource group mechanism. Niche and the survival of RSPs, which is in terms of human contact in a world that is divided in terms of digitalisation and economic challenges, are also one of the strengths of RSPN. Similarly, some groups identified that the unity and diversity of the RSPs, the support from the leadership, and the completely rich experience, which is coming from the diversified field, is the strength of RSPN. The effectiveness across the board and bringing the RSPs under one umbrella, Information flow and detailing, intact leadership and the long history of RSPN in community development are also the strengths of RSPN. In addition, commitment to gender equity as part of its programmes, public credibility with donors, government and the communities, its geographical location which is accessible to the

government and donors, the institutional memory which is retained within the organisation, Advocacy, lobbying, and networking, donor and public sector engagement are the potential strengths of RSPN. Some of the groups considered the diversity in terms of geography and programs, common mission and approach, proven record of accomplishment of funding, Endowment, evolved system & CDD as a brand as the strengths of RSPN. One of its strengths is that its large amount of data that can be used to write research papers for publication.

### **Weaknesses:**

The groups identified some weaknesses of RSPN, as the work factor does not meet the standard, which is critical for RSPN, which is stated in the thematic areas, and lucrative expertise, where they quoted the example of lacking technical expertise in Climate change and weather. Similarly, the dilatory delayed process to take corrective measures, lack of realisation to reallocate existing human resources for optimal resources, the capacity gaps in planning delivery and partnership, challenges in coordination and gaps in complementing with RSPs, the board size are the major weaknesses of the RSPN. Some have highlighted that pool of expertise needs to be developed or improved. Moreover, some RSPs feel that RSPN takes a larger share of resource mobilization. Some groups mentioned that RSPN does not have an extensive presence in Punjab and being based in Islamabad is a weakness in terms of local Knowledge. The lack of alignment in terms of mission and money, the humanitarian profile, lack of relevant sectoral technical experts (engineers, climate specialists, and educational specialists) are some of the weaknesses the participants presented. Some were of the view that RSPN is dependent on its member RSPs, and encounter governance issues during project implementation, lack of leverage with the Government and Establishment, lack of financial resources for investment in output-based projects, limited innovation in project design (thinking out of the box), financial sustainability issues are there.

### **Opportunities:**

The groups identified some possible opportunities for RSPN such as climate change, rehabilitation phase activities on post-2022 flood-affected scenarios, to engage the stakeholders with the communities, the alignment of the communities with RSPN, the role of RSPs in building a community, lack of localisation and capabilities and absence of local intermediary organisations, institutional flux, Agri-tech, family planning, GCF. Similarly, the opportunity to prepare the organisation for opportunities in DRR, Invest in linkages and information gathering from academics, sectoral experts, and researchers for 'capture work', resource groups to be re-focused on capacity building and collaborative learning, and Strategic and collaborative planning with innovative thinkers. In addition, enhancing capacities for interventions in CC, adaptation, resilience building, mitigation, humanitarian Response, RSPN's role as a fund manager, broadening its horizon, expanding internationally like BRAC, developing linkages with academia for research and displaying its work, strengthening of resource groups to actively engage in resource mobilization, developing relationships with Government are some of the opportunities the participants highlighted.

### **Threats:**

The groups identified some threats such as the absence of any laws or policies on the support of RSPs' work, conflict of interest, work factor, hindered implementation of programs and the achievement of results. Likewise, sustainability in terms of continuing the human legacy, operational issues of the banking account faced by the local community, the competition with the INGOs and the limited space for civil societies are some of the threats the groups identified that RSPN may have. Moreover, some of them reported, successions issues as dynamic organisations, shrinking space for non-profits including RSPs, increasing Interference of Government Agencies (EAD, SECP, ISI), and abruptly changing policies and regulations as threats for RSPN. In the

same way, some of them believed that the donor outlook has changed toward Pakistan and donors can bypass RSPN for direct implementation with the RSPs. Moreover, the ownership of RSPN by RSPs (RSPs see RSPN as a competitor), the shrinking of space for CSOs in view of Govt policies and donors' priorities, are also some of the threats identified by the groups.

- **Things to address immediately.**
  - Key capacities to be enhanced for effective Resource Mobilisation
  - Planning for improving financial sustainability
- **Next Year Plan**
  - External networking and involving partner RSPs in the process for identifying opportunities.
  - Improving and extending relationships with Fed. and provincial Govts
- **Recommendations**
  - RSPN should reconsider designing it as a fund management organisation
  - Future governance planning- inclusion of fresh members specially women on all BoD Membership

## Closing Remarks by Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan



“As I mentioned the other day that this is the 70th year of my working life and I spent 40 years with RSPs. When I looked back to those years, it reminded me of the Chinese proverb that a good manager does nothing himself/herself, but leaves nothing undone. I was lucky, I found the CEOs and each one of them, they are like a sparkling light to me and they did everything. I did not have to do much, except that they came to me and said that they would like my advice. Thus, I want to thank them sincerely that whatever has been achieved by RSPs, it was their hard work, their dedication and they will be the

ones who will be able to assemble, dedicated to hiring the people to work with them. Now the time has come we all have been discussing succession. I think that when I look at all of you, I feel that not only one when there is a merit of wonderful persons who can take my place. In addition, it is difficult for me to decide which one, because they are the ones who do it. I thought that the best principle was to suggest whom I would like to succeed. Maybe not immediately but somebody who can be helpful to me. It is not now possible for me either really to devote that much time or to have that energy. I thought that the best would be because it is just not possible for me to decide which one of the diamonds that I have, should be a successor. So I thought that the best principle would be the seniority of the organisation, which would be a sort of neutral approach. So I would suggest that immediately Shandana, somebody has to now help me, maybe as a vice chairman. All the RSPs have seen that the first RSP in the replication of the AKRSP was Sarhad Rural Support Programme, so I would like to take in as the vice chairman for the

time being till I decide that now the time has come that I should step down. So I thought that this was a very good opportunity that I propose according to the seniority of the organisation, the chairmanship of RSPN goes to Masood ul-Mulk, that was the one thing I wanted to say today and I shall be grateful If you would all accept this suggestion of mine. I wish you all a bright and wonderful future and the RSPs remain as shining as they were. Thank you very much”.

## Appendix: Annual Strategy Retreat Agenda

*Venue: PC Hotel Bhurban*

0930-1000	Registration of Participants
1000-1020	Participants' Introduction (to be facilitated by RSPN event moderator)
1020- 1030	Opening Remarks by Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman, RSPN
1030-1130	<p><b>Session I: Climate Change and Biodiversity (1 hour - flexible)</b></p> <p>Towards a Strategy for the RSPs.</p> <p>A conversation with and presentation on The Living Indus framework by Ms Aban Marker Kabraji. Senior Advisor Climate Change and Biodiversity. The Triple Planetary Crisis. UN Development Coordination, Office for Asia-Pacific (UNDCO), Bangkok</p>
1130-1145	<b>Working Tea</b>
1145-1245	<p><b>Session II: Lessons from Core EU Funded Programmes in Sindh (SUCCESS) and Balochistan (BRACE)</b></p> <p>We are coming to the end of three generously funded EU programmes in. We will discuss the lessons and impacts of two of the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (SUCCESS) and the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRACE). These 'core' programmes target the poor with specific interventions, work to scale and seek to strengthen citizen-state links – always a challenge.</p> <p>RSPN has conducted studies (internally and externally done) and numerous lesson learning exercises to identify key lessons and impacts of BRACE and SUCCESS interventions. These interventions are also carried out by RSPs in other provinces, through other programmes. We will discuss lessons learnt and the future of similar programmes. Important interventions to discuss: Community Investment Funds, their management and sustainability; TVET and backward/forward linkages, Joint Development Committees and the viability of linkages between government and community institutions.</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lessons and Impacts of the Sindh union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (SUCCESS) – Presenter Fazal Ali Saadi, Programme Manager SUCCESS, RSPN</li> <li>- Lessons and Impacts of the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment programme (BRACE). Presenter Sajjad Hussain Changezi, Programme Manager BRACE, RSPN</li> </ul> <p><i>Moderator: Fazal Ali Saadi, Programme Manager SUCCESS, RSPN</i></p>
1245-1345	<p><b>Session III: Resource Mobilisation by RSPs</b></p> <p><i>Moderator: Dr. Rashid Bajwa, Director RSPN.</i></p>
1345-1445	<b>Lunch Break and Group Photograph</b>
1445-1515	<p><b>Session IV: Resistance to Resilience – Architecture and Mental Health (0.5 hrs)</b></p> <p><i>Mr. Zain Mustafa, Founder of Indus River Valley Institute - includes housing rehabilitation, post flood</i></p>
1515-1630	<p><b>Session V: Open Session. RSPs to identify for discussion.</b></p> <p><b>Working Tea</b></p>
1900-2030	<b>Music Performance by Ali Aftab Saeed</b>
2030	<b>Dinner</b>
<b>DAY TWO 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY TILL LUNCH</b>	
1000-1240	<p><b>Session VI: SWOT of RSPN</b></p> <p>Group Work on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) of RSPN.</p> <p>To end with the Way Forward for RSPN</p> <p><i>Moderator: Shandana Khan, CEO RSPN</i></p>

1240-1300	Closing Remarks by Mr Shoab Sultan Khan, CEO RSPN
1300-1400	LUNCH AND DEPARTURE FOR ISLAMABAD

January 19-20, 2023