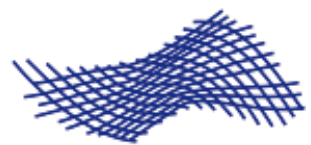




4th National Convention of Community Local Support Organisations

rural support programmes network **RSPN**



Contents

1 Introduction

2 Opening Session

Welcome Address

Overview of BKPAP Programme in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Presentation by LSO Koshish and Women's VO Brekhna, District Mardan

Presentation by Community Activist, District Dir

Presentation by LSO Umar Kot, District Rajanpur

Overview of the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme in Sindh

3 Second Session

Overview of USAID Supported Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program

Presentation by LSO Fazil Rural Development, District Bhakkar

Presentation by LSO Kaimanja, District Muzaffarabad

Question and Answer Session

Presentation by Network Kirman, Khurram Agency

Presentation by LSO North City, Kharan

4 Third Session

Presentation by LSO Awaz, District Shikarpur

Presentation by LSO Umeed, District Layyah

Talk On Governance by Director, AKRSP

Presentation by LSO DAWN, District Tharparkar

Question and Answer Session

Presentation by LSO Thaley, District Ghanche

Brief Overview of LSONs

Presentation by Tehsil LSON Karawan, District Kech

Brief Talk by Chief of Party, RSPN-ASP

Question and Answer Session

5 Closing Session

Distribution of Shields to Presenting LSOs

Remarks by CEO RSPN

Closing Remarks by Chairman RSPN

Introduction

The Convention aimed to consolidate and learn from their experiences in various areas of development and developing partnerships and linkages with various organisations.

Following on from the success of the 1st National Convention of Federations of Community Organisations, which was held in December of 2008, the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) convened the 2nd National Convention of Federations of Community Organisations in December of 2009, and then the 3rd National Convention in December 2010. The 4th National Convention of Community Local Support Organisations was held on the 2nd of November 2011 in Islamabad.

The purpose of such an event was to continue to learn from the experience of grassroots organisations such as Community Organisations (COs) which operate at the neighbourhood level and are made up of members from the households in that area; Village Organisations (VOs) which are representative bodies of COs operating at the village level; and their federations, Local Support Organisations (LSOs) which represent all the COs and VOs in a Union Council. To date, there are over 520 LSOs across Pakistan being fostered by the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in all provinces, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The Convention aimed to consolidate and learn from their experiences in various areas of development, namely in terms of security, the environment, gender equality, supporting the poorest, resource mobilisation and developing partnerships and linkages with various organisations. The Convention also highlighted the impact of two large provincial programmes, namely the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) being funded by the Government of Sindh and being implemented by the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) and the Bacha Khan Poverty Alleviation Programme (BKPAP) being funded by the Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and being implemented by the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP).

The event was attended by over 300 participants which included representatives from the federal and provincial governments, both local and international donors and NGOs and senior management of the RSPs. Most importantly, the Convention was attended by community members from over 110 LSOs from across the country from districts such as Turbat, Mianwali, Rajanpur, Mardan, Malakand, Swat, Skardu, Chitral, Kharan and Layyah.

Opening Session

The opening session of the Convention was presided over by Mr. Javed Iqbal, Federal Secretary Railways who was the Chief Guest for the event. The session started with the recitation from the Holy Quran. This was followed by a welcome address by Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman RSPN.

Welcome Address

Having welcomed everyone to the 4th National Convention of Community Local Support Organisations, Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan started off with a personal insight to how he had been working for 60 years and should be retired by now but was not because he was so involved in the cause that included everyone in the hall. Amid applause he continued to reminisce about how he had spent 25 years with the government, then the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and since the last 28 years with RSPN. He talked about the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and how he was asked to join it so many years ago and today he could see that the current scenario was an outcome of this. He went on to mention the number of programmes and families he had been involved with along the way.

Mr. Khan shared with the participants that when he was in East Pakistan as Assistant Commissioner, he met Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan (implementer of the Comilla project and who later on became his mentor) who said that if you want to help the poor they have to be organised, they need to find leaders from within the community to shine and bring progress; they are like gems. He congratulated everyone present in the Convention for his or her contributions and dedication to the field of community development.

The session continued with presentations from the presenters mentioned below:

Overview of BKPAP Programme in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Mr. Masood-ul-Mulk started by informing the participants that SRSP was established in 1989. Since its establishment many programmes were initiated with the government but none of them were successful except for the Bacha Khan Poverty Alleviation Programme (BKPAP) which is a partnership between

Chairman RSPN, Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan, addressing the participants during the convention



the government and civil society. The BKPAP is a poverty targeted project which provides a range of services to only the poorest of households; services such as flexible community finance, community physical infrastructures and vocational training, to name a few. The details of the programme and its main features are mentioned below:

- The programme is being implemented in four districts namely Upper Dir, Battagram, Mardan and Karak.
- A total of 40 Union Councils have been selected and which include 139,921 households.
- The first task of the programme was to survey households in order to ascertain their levels of poverty (and thus decide which products/services they would receive) according to the Poverty Scorecard (currently being used by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)).
- The programme was developed to target the poorest, namely those in different poverty categories such as Extremely Poor, Chronically Poor and Transitory Poor.
- The programme consists of three components: Social Mobilisation, Livelihood Strengthening and Social Protection.

Mr. Masood-ul-Mulk said that in addition to the BKPAP being a poverty-oriented project, the reason it being unique was also because it was a partnership between civil society and the government. He said that the programme was being implemented in a way which consisted of ownership

The Convention highlighted the impact of two large, government funded and community-driven provincial programmes, namely the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) and the Bacha Khan Poverty Alleviation Programme (BKPAP).

from both District Officers as well as local rural communities resulting in the fact that the benefits were being felt at the grassroots.



Nadir Shah of LSO Koshish

Presentation by LSO Koshish and Women's VO Brekhna, District Mardan

Mr. Nadir Shah, President LSO Koshish started the presentation with a pictorial image of a railway station, made by the British Government pre-partition, which still exists in his village, to highlight the impoverished region that they come from. This railway station served many purposes such as its original function of a railway station, then a granary and most recently as a meeting-house for villagers. He gave this example to highlight how the villagers made use of every facility available to serve their purpose.

He continued by describing the mission of the LSO which was to create a network where people, using self-help, could move out of their poverty-stricken condition and to make communities self-sustainable by organising them. Mr. Shah said that the LSO was formed in 2009 following a social mobilisation programme through the BKPAP project. Currently the LSO consists of 98 COs (55 men's COs and 43 women's COs) which had been federated into 25 VOs (15 men's VOs and 10 women's VOs). The General Body of the LSO consists of 100 people (of which 40 are women) while its Executive Body consists of 21 people (of which six are women). The BKPAP programme has provided several services through the LSO, such as:

- Providing 16 poor women with income generating grants of Rs. 5,000 each
- Providing 62 poor women with flexible community finance loans of Rs. 10,000 each
- Providing community infrastructure schemes worth Rs. 3,122,900 (of which Rs. 624,580 was provided by communities themselves) in the form

Ms. Shahida Parveen of VO Brekhna



of street pavements, sanitation and irrigation – which ultimately has benefited 650 households

- Training 21 community members in agricultural training
- Training 17 community members in livestock training
- Deworming and vaccinating 1,634 livestock
- Training 40 men to gain skills in areas such as welding, motorcycle repairing, plumbing, mobile repairing, electrician training and in operating heavy machinery.
- Training 83 women to gain skills in areas such as tailoring, embroidery, food preservation, and tie and dye.

Ms. Shahida Parveen from VO Brekhna joined in to share her story. She said that many NGOs had tried to come to their area before but were unsuccessful due to cultural pressures, but the persistence of SRSP finally paid off by introducing the BKPAP project. She said that they started off by making a small organisation consisting of women only and it was through that organisation that they started to carry out various activities. These were activities such as ending tribal feuds with the help of their Women's Jirga and carrying out self-help schemes to help needy and destitute individuals in their communities. Their women's VO also managed to combat an age old tradition where girls as young as 12 or 13 would get married. Through their awareness-raising, the VO changed this tradition so that the youngest a girl could get married was at the age of 20. A penalty of Rs. 20,000 was imposed if anyone younger was married off. They had also encouraged male members of families to let young girls go to school.

Presentation by Community Activist, District Dir

Mr. Sher Mohammad, a community activist from Dir welcomed everyone in Pushto and started his presentation by describing the geographical features of his district which was bordered by Swat, Afghanistan, Chitral and Lower Dir . He said that when terrorism was rampant in Swat, the terrorists fled via their village towards Afghanistan. The people of his district were initially hospitable towards them (according to Pakhtun tradition) as they were not aware of their true identities. However a suicide attack took place on their mosque killing around a 100 people after which an Aman (peace) committee was established. When the people of the district became organised and bought weapons they confronted the outsiders and some were captured and handed over to the Pakistan Army, while others fled. Mr. Sher Mohammad said that the people of his area have been doing this for generations; defending themselves against invaders and enemies. Many such people have threatened them and so the villagers live in fear.

He then said that at first, they had resisted Government efforts to help improve their living conditions and did not allow the construction of roads, schools or hospitals. But now they have changed their way of thinking by coming together to work with each other and have requested the government for help. However the first organisation they contacted was SRSP and as a result a road is being built. Out of 800 households hardly anyone is educated and women are completely uneducated. There is still conflict and bloodshed as recently some Afghan militants had attacked them and a confrontation took place. He ended

Mr. Sher Mohammad of Dir



his presentation by urging everyone to make a pact to strive for peace, for without peace there is nothing.

Presentation by LSO Umar Kot, District Rajanpur

Ms. Jamila from LSO Umarkot started her presentation by stating that her district is in the grip of extreme poverty and that all their problems are related to this. Secondly in the beginning they were not united thus the need for social mobilisation arose for the betterment of women.



Ms. Jamila went on to provide some details regarding her LSO, saying that it had been established in 2010. A total of 4,490 households reside in UC Umarkot while 2,462 of them are members of the LSO. The LSO consists of four VOs which contain a further 141 COs. The LSO has 39 members in its General Body while six are a part of the Executive Committee. Ms. Jamila explained that their LSO was solely a women's LSO and that their activities were for the benefit of women in their area. The LSO worked with communities to change the negative thinking of people. She went on to give an example of the negative thinking such as having to personally combat social pressures when they came for training events to Islamabad as when they would return to their village, rumours would be spread that they had been kidnapped. This would result in the men in their communities to threaten to kill them. Despite these pressures they continued with their work, some of which have been:

- Creating awareness about family planning
- Initiating Mother and Child health schemes
- Conducting midwife and vocational skills training workshops
- Formation of youth committees in order for young people to plan their development
- Helping 1,080 women make their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs)
- Setting up of a Zakat Fund



Dr. Ghulam Rasool Samejo,
Team Leader UCBPRP

Overview of the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme in Sindh

Dr. Ghulam Rasool Samejo, Team Leader UCBPRP stated that the Government of Sindh and SRSO started their partnership in 2002 when the Government of Sindh helped to create SRSO. He then went on to the UCBPRP project which was a programme created by RSPN and its partners which brought together a holistic combination of development activities based on the RSPs' experience in the field. The UCBPRP was funded when the RSPs presented the programme to the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary of Sindh in June of 2008. Following on from that, the project was approved by the Government of Sindh in October 2008 for a total sum of Rs. 2,947,526 million. The project began in February of 2009 and due to its success has seen an expansion in activities and funds as well as now being expanded to districts Tharparkar and Jacobabad as well as the original districts of Shikarpur and Kashmore-Kandhkot.

Dr. Samejo then explained some of the activities of the UCBPRP project which are aimed solely at the poorest of women, which include:

- Identification of the poorest households through the Poverty scorecard
- Flexible community microfinance
- Income generating grants
- Vocational skills training for unemployed youth from poor households
- Community Physical Infrastructure schemes
- Low Cost Housing schemes
- Education; in terms of making non-functional schools become functional
- Micro Health Insurance for poor households
- Housing for flood-affected households which included drainage systems, latrines and hand-pumps.

The UCBPRP project is still in process and achieving its targets as documented by the five third-party process reviews that it has undergone as a part of its monitoring and evaluation process.

Second Session

Overview of USAID Supported Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program

Mr. Shakeel Kakakhel, Chief of Party, Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP) briefly introduced the programme. He said it was a five-year programme with two core components; the Ambassador Fund Programme and the Small Grants Programme and that it was being implemented by the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and RSPN. He said that applications for both programmes are not cycle-based and are accepted throughout the year.

Mr. Kakakhel then went into the details of each programme, mentioned below:

The Ambassadors Fund Programme (AFP):

- Purpose of the fund is to allow the US Ambassador to respond to urgent community needs or opportunities that may arise
- Supports grants up to \$100,000 for local self-help initiatives of less than one year
- Communities and civil society groups must be willing to contribute approximately 25% of total project resource requirements.

Small Grants Programme (SGP):

- Involves grants of under \$250,000, covering innovative and unique projects, spanning from one to three years.
- Grants will be awarded to Pakistani non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, civil groups and communities.

Mr. Kakakhel went onto explain that the project was created for organisations and not individuals. In addition to this, he said that the organisations should be community-based and not based on religious or ideology. He said that the priority areas for the SGP were:

- Education



- Energy (biogas, solar energy, wind power, etc)
- Health (Mother & Child healthcare especially)
- Economic Growth including Agriculture
- Governance

He went on to state that the proposals must be based around any of the above-mentioned areas otherwise they would not have a chance of approval. He said that the issues and challenges that the SGAFP project faced were that they could not leave projects un-monitored; therefore requiring constant checking and monitoring to take place all year round.

Presentation by LSO Fazil Rural Development, District Bhakkar

Ms. Shamim Akhtar started her presentation by informing the participants that her LSO was established in 2009 and that the vision of the LSO was to provide every individual with their basic human rights irrespective of their colour or creed, and its mission statement was to provide basic health facilities to all the people living in the district and the eradication of poverty. Ms. Shamim Akhtar went on to say that the values and objectives of the LSO were to reduce poverty and empower the women of the area. The LSO had over 77% of the UC's households as its members in the form of 11 VOs which were federations of a total of 224 COs (120 of which were women's COs). She then went onto describe some of the activities that the LSO had carried out, such as:

- Carrying out the Biogas SLBAP project
- Implementing a community-based revolving fund for flexible microloans
- Surveying households in the entire UC using the Poverty scorecard
- Specifically education and health issues, the LSO had:
 - Encouraged the parents of 247 children to start sending their children to school
 - Provided 87 poor students with uniforms and books
 - 120 women were provided with adult literacy education
 - Educational assistance was provided to 16 students (from different classes) in the form of scholarships
 - Four health camps were organised in which 611 people were provided with free medicine, 86 eye patients were given checkups while 36 were operated upon
 - A maternity home was established
 - Carrying out family planning and polio-awareness campaigns
 - Provided free treatment for 20 poor patients while interest free loans were provided to 15 individuals for their treatment
 - Establishment of a blood bank which has 40 individuals which donate blood when required

In addition to these and other activities, the LSO was also the recipient of the Ambassador's Fund Program from USAID through NRSP. Their project was to provide shelter to poor flood affected households which had no shelter left. The objectives of the project were to rehabilitate 25 flood-affected families by constructing two-room houses with a toilet, kitchen and hand-pump. The total beneficiaries that the project would reach would be 205. The Executive and



The vision of the LSO was to provide every individual with their basic human rights irrespective of their colour or creed, and its mission statement was to provide basic health facilities to all the people living in the district and the eradication of poverty.

General bodies of the LSO all participate actively in the implementation of the project while three committees have been formed for the smooth completion of the project. The lesson that the LSO has learnt is that by becoming organised, a lot can be achieved and needy people can be helped and given a better standard of life.

Presentation by LSO Kaimanja, District Muzaffarabad

Mr. Bokhari started his presentation by talking about how one can learn from each other's programmes and achievements and then implement them. The earthquake in 2005 affected his area tremendously and caused 100% destruction and since 2006 they have had to start a new existence. The LSO consists of 14 VOs which have been federated from a total of 75 COs. 70% of the households in the UC are members of the LSO through these organisations. The LSO has worked in various sectors such as in social mobilisation, microfinance, education, skills development, infrastructure, emergency and disaster response and in the protection of the environment. However the Mr. Bokhari stated that the LSO has also been successful in accessing a project from the Ambassador's Fund Program; for the construction of a link road. The eight month project will aim to construct 13kms of link road at a total cost of Rs. 11.36 million (of which 2,875,820 is the LSO's share). The link roads will benefit a total of 2,220 households.

Mr. Bokhari ended his presentation by mentioning the future plans of the LSO which were to cover 100% of the area of the UC, work towards ensuring the sustainability of its existing COs and VOs, carry out training events for its members and work on disaster management.

Question and Answer Session

The participants were invited to clarify points and raise queries from the presenters. Mentioned below are some of the questions and their answers:

Q. Mr. Malik Fayyaz from Balochistan wanted to know from LSO Fazil what they did to generate funds for the LSO. Also how did they arrange the money for poor women's marriages and what was the recovery time frame?

A. Mr. Akhtar from LSO Fazil said that female wedding expenses were met by collecting funds from the community and the members who joined the LSO. After some time the LSO had established a reputation and were trusted so when they were contacted they readily gave aid.

LSO funds were gathered through membership fees and also through the sale of harvested crops; 3% of which would be collected and kept by the LSO.

Q. Ms. Farhat Zafar from Kotli Sattian had a question for the representatives from LSO Kaimanja that when they reinvest the credit pool, why do they not return the savings instead of giving it out in the form of loans?

A. The presenter from LSO Kaimanja answered that when the saving came in the credit pool they came in the name of the CO and the members of that CO.



Mr. Bokhari (Standing Left) of LSO Kaimanja



Ms. Farhat Zafar

When this comes in the pool of the VO it is the COs savings in a joint amount. The VO has to return money to members if the CO demands the money from the pool. The reason why members choose to reinvest and lend their savings out again is because it gives them higher returns and because they trust the LSO.

Q. Ms. Shahnaz from Tharparkar had a question for the representatives from LSO Koshish from Mardan regarding why the fine was so large for underage marriages?

A. Mr. Nadir Shah from LSO Kohshish gave an example of a recent incident in their area where an underage marriage led to murder and misery. The reason for such a large fine was to end this terrible tradition.

Presentation by Network Kirman, Khurram Agency

Mr. Habibullah Jam Wani started his presentation by describing Kirman. He said that Kirman was located in the Khurram Agency which has been divided into three parts; Upper, Lower and Central Khurram. Kirman Network is located near Paracchinar and was established in July 2011. There are a total of 1,459 households in the area across five villages; 984 of those households have been organised into four VOs.

He said that the difficulties faced by the people living in Khurram Agency are many, such as the absence of security as suicide bombings and kidnappings are rampant. As a result of this, educational institutions suffer while women and children suffer due to poverty and lack of medical facilities.

Mr. Wani then went on to describe some of the activities of the network:

- Providing medical facilities to all areas of the region
- Provide running water
- Registration and recognition of Roshni Community School Paiman - a school for orphans
- Established a Government High School for girls and awareness-raising regarding educating and employing the youth so that they are kept busy so that they may be kept away from illegal practices such as becoming suicide bombers
- Promotion of peace and tolerance among school children through speech competitions and sports activities - which have proved to be very successful

The future plan of the network was to continue the ongoing peace process in the area, introduce more women-focused programmes, increase social mobilisation efforts by making new COs, establish an office for the network and to register it and to develop linkages with external organisations.

A member from the network, Ms. Maria Malhotra added to the presentation and spoke specifically on the network's women-focussed programme. She gave a brief background on the conditions of women living in a restricted society such as that in Kurram Agency. She said that initially before SRSP came, a Christian



Mr. Habibullah Jam Wani of Network Kirman

75

Households

Provided Electricity after LSO
North City Contacted WAPDA

organisation St. Peters, was working on the needs of women. Gradually the organisation gained the trust of the community and when SRSP came into the area, they learnt about the strength of participatory development. They started organising women in the communities in order for them to partake in their own development. Currently the women-focused programme has the following objectives:

- Organising women communities
- Women empowerment through providing them enterprise development and skill training
- Employment opportunities provided to women
- Female Teachers Training

Presentation by LSO North City, Kharan

Mr. Noor Falak Shah introduced LSO North City by stating that the LSO was situated in Kharan which was an extremely remote and impoverished region of Balochistan. The LSO was located in UC Northern Kharan and was established in June of 2010. The LSO comprised of eight villages and 2,096 households; out of which 933 were member households. Mr. Shah said that the mission of the LSO was to organise households and reduce poverty by promoting self-help schemes. He then went onto explain some of the challenges that the LSO faced, such as:

- Unsettled state of affairs in Balochistan and the mistrust of the people for government and non government organisations
- Cultural limitations on women
- Political and social conditions coming in the way of developmental progress
- Lack of education in most individuals
- Lack of communication infrastructure exasperated by the geographical size and remoteness of the province and low population



However despite these challenges, the LSO has managed to carry out several activities, some of which are mentioned below:

- Included the poorest of households into CO and VOs
- Solved tribal and individual disputes through a local Jirga system
- Helped earthquake victims by establishing a camp and distributing 100 sacks of food to 250 households
- Promoting education of children amongst the communities which resulted in children being admitted into government schools
- Conducted Trained Birth Attendant (TBA) training with the support of the Ministry of Health; as a result 40 women were trained.
- Organised a campaign for awareness regarding polio
- Provided poor women with sewing and stitching training
- 275 members (of which 133 were women) of the LSO were supported to get their CNICs made
- Initiated a Rs. 9 crore water project with the support of the Ministry of Public Health which would ultimately benefit 8,450 people
- 75 households were provided electricity after the LSO contacted WAPDA

The future plans of the LSO included carrying out a survey regarding the poverty status of the households in its UC; using the Poverty scorecard. The LSO also wanted to work to promote health awareness, promote education (especially of children from the ages of 5-16), ensure that all people above the age of 18 had CNICs and promote women in COs and VOs and ultimately into the LSO.

Third Session

Presentation by LSO Awaz, District Shikarpur

Ms. Naseem introduced her women's LSO by stating that it was established in July 2010 and consisted of 31 villages and 2,890 households out of which 2,023 were organised. The LSO's General Body consisted of 30 women while the Executive Body consisted of 11 women. The total savings of the LSO amounted to Rs.3, 661,000.

Ms. Naseem then introduced one of the schemes that her LSO was carrying out, which was the Income Generating Grant (IGG). IGGs are income-generating grants which are provided to the poorest of women (having been identified through the Poverty scorecard). Only women with scores in the range of 0-11 are given an IGG if they request for one. Ms. Naseem said that as of now, 45 women (from 45 households) had been provided with IGGs amounting to a total of Rs. 408,000. She went onto further explain that out of the 45, seven women, having used their income generating grants, have now been able to qualify for flexible microloans from the Community Investment Fund (CIF). The CIF is a community revolving fund out of which the poorest women are provided flexible microloans and which is controlled and managed by the VO. Women decide who to provide loans to while the beneficiary decides on the terms of her microloan. Ms. Naseem said that in their LSO, three cycles of CIF had already taken place. The first cycle of loans amounted to Rs. 3,577,000, the second amounted to Rs.1,949,000 while the third amounted to Rs.1,453,000.

Ms. Naseem then went onto state some of the activities that her LSO had obtained from the UCBPRP project taking place in her UC, such as:

- 244 CO members obtained training in management training while 244 members were trained in how to manage CIF
- 60 VO members were trained in management training as well as CIF training while 60 were trained in financial record-keeping
- Eight villages were provided with clean drinking water schemes while 24 households in their UC were provided with low-cost housing.

6,979,000

Pakistani Rupees

Provided in Microloans by LSO Awaz to its Community's Poorest Women



Ms. Naseem of LSO Awaz

In addition to these activities, the LSO has also carried out several self-help initiatives, some of which are mentioned below, such as:

- Planted 3,350 trees in different villages
- 650 people were supported to get their CNICs made
- Every village is cleaned on a monthly basis
- 10 year old tribal feuds resolved
- 855 children admitted to school
- Helped 52 girls to enlist in the Pakistan Army
- The future plans of the LSO consisted of promoting the needs of women and to initiate activities which would help them economically and socially such as setting up a dairy scheme which would help women sell their milk at a profit, open a girls' High School with support from the Ministry of Education and help develop linkages to the market so that girls that have received various vocational skills-based training, are able to sell their goods in the market and earn higher levels of profit.



Ms. LSO Shahzadi of LSO Umeed

Presentation by LSO Umeed, District Layyah

Ms. Shahzadi started her presentation by talking about how the women in her UC have increased confidence and are more aware of basic human rights thanks to the Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP). She then went on to present the profile of her LSO which is spread over 25 villages. The LSO has a membership which consists of over 65% of the households in the UC. The LSO consists of 28 VOs (of which six are men's) which have been federated from 228 COs (of which 136 are women's COs).

Ms. Shazadi said that in the beginning there were numerous problems that the women present in the UC had to face such as not being aware of their basic human rights and their inability to go out of their homes. As a result, all major decisions in the household would be made solely by the men in their families.

In order to change this, when the LSO was formed, it's first priority was to change this injustice. It did so by ensuring that the majority if not all of microloans (through the CIF) should go to the poorest of women and not men. The LSO initiated campaigns to spread awareness regarding the importance of educating children (especially girls); as a result 850 boys and girls were enrolled into primary schools throughout the UC. The LSO also carried out vaccination campaigns while awareness-raising sessions regarding basic health and hygiene were also provided. In order to economically empower women (in addition to the CIF), the LSO also provided basic vocational skills-based training from which women would be able to generate some income for themselves.

Ms. Shazadi concluded her presentation by explaining some of the future plans of the LSO, which are to:

- Improve the standard of education for children
- Provide support for the education of the children of extremely poor households
- Establish links with government and non-government organisations
- Establish a maternity centre (Mother and Child health centre)
- Work more towards getting women their basic rights



Mr. Sohail Khoja, Director AKRSP

- Support those women who have not been able to obtain CNICs due to purdah reasons

Talk On Governance by Director, AKRSP

Mr. Sohail Khoja, Director Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) congratulated RSPN on the well-organised Convention and expressed his and the LSO's thanks to all the foreign donor agencies present at the event for their continued support and help. He said that for the RSPs or in the rural development sector as a whole, one name was a beacon of light. The pioneer of all this, without exaggeration was Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan. Mr. Khoja went on to say that he had been in the development field since the past 30- 35 years. He wanted to remind the audience of some facts or reiterate some points.

First of all the funds which are collected as donations, during fund-raising or their own contribution do not belong to the organisation; they are trust funds for the people. They are kept in safe-keeping and that the organisations were just conduits through which these funds flowed. These funds should efficiently, judicially, transparently and on time be given to the subject. Community-based organisations should have local accountability and no favouritism or nepotism should have any place in such organisations. The question that the people running the LSOs should ask themselves all the time is that is the constituency they are representing benefiting from the funds allotted to it, and are the funds reaching the people that they are for and how many lives have been changed for the better by them. He stated that a system of check and balance should exist within everyone and any decision should never be the decision of a sole individual; it should always be two or more for better management and sound decisions. Accounting and maintaining books was another sensitive and vital issue. His recommendation to RSPN and others was that wherever training is needed to maintain accounts, some investment should be done in human development. This can be done from existing resources or external help can be hired. This is all to save oneself from blame and maximise the usage of the funds. He ended his speech by once again complimenting RSPN on organising an excellent event.



Mr. Shanaz Jamali of LSO DAWN

Presentation by LSO DAWN, District Tharparkar

Ms. Shanaz Jamali started her presentation by informing the participants that their LSO was established in 2005 and the objective of their LSO was to reduce poverty. LSO DAWN comprises of 980 households, out of a total of 3,652 households in the UC.

The aims and goals of the LSO were to give women of the UC equal social rights and improve their standards of living. She said this LSO was created to give women a separate organisation where they could use their potential and get rid of the age-old prejudices against them. It was also there to make men realise that women could do work and could actually play a big part in increasing the income of the household.

She continued her presentation by explaining some of the problems that her LSO had faced such as:

- Women were excluded from all important matters

- Women were not being educated
- Unnecessary interference from men in women's issues
- Difficulty for women to step out of their villages

Ms. Jamali said the LSO was working on women's empowerment and the problems that women face but that it would take time to solve all these issues. She said that their LSO wanted to make sure that women were treated as individuals and not just daughters, wives, sisters or daughter-in-laws. Ms. Jamali said that women should be given loans to make them financially independent and they should be educated in order to make them aware of their basic rights. Some of the important activities that her LSO had carried out were:

- Mobilising women into COs and VOs
- Developing a disaster/emergency management plan
- Increased the enrolment of children in schools

The future plan of the LSO was to ensure that 100% of the women in their UC were in the LSO and to provide them with assistance and support. They also wanted to help girls become independent through vocational skills-based training such as making girls computer literate.

Question and Answer Session

Q. A member of the audience asked a question regarding LSO Umeed and where they obtained their funds for their housing scheme and how did they complete it?

A. The representative from LSO Umeed answered that RSPN provided the LSO with the funding for the housing scheme which was a project in which the poorest of women were provided with land for housing purposes.

Q. Ms. Jillani asked the LSO from Balochistan about how they had removed poverty, as she did not see any evidence of this in their presentation.

A. The representative answered that poverty-reducing programmes were introduced to the communities through their LSO such as providing the poor with training in computer skills, tailoring and motorcycle repair. He said that these people were now earning an income and working towards reducing their poverty

Q. Mr. Zafarullah from an LSO in Mianwali asked LSO Umeed whether they have a way of selecting the women who they support and if they give them loans for houses?

A. The representative from LSO Umeed answered that the poor selected were basically homeless and that they were given land to build on as they had no land to call their own.

Q. The same person asked another question about how they selected women for CIF and whether they had a grading system.

A. The representative replied that the most dejected and hopeless of society are chosen and that the Poverty scorecard is the deciding factor. The standard and format of the Poverty scorecard was then described whereby the scale is from 0-100 and that those women falling in the score of 0-24 are considered the lowest in terms of poverty ranking.

Q. A representative from an LSO in Peshawar had a question for LSO Kaimanja about how they found a different donor for each project and that too such big projects. His own LSO is always looking for donors and trying to get their projects approved but found this difficult. He also said that they should stop relying on donors and try to use and not abuse nature and look towards self- reliance rather than dependency on donors.

A. The representative from LSO Kaimanja said that the Internet was a great invention and one could approach multiple donors through this or via newspapers also. If one fits their criteria, they will accept any proposal. Self-help is good but sometimes donors can assist and speed up the process.

Presentation by LSO Thaley, District Ghanche

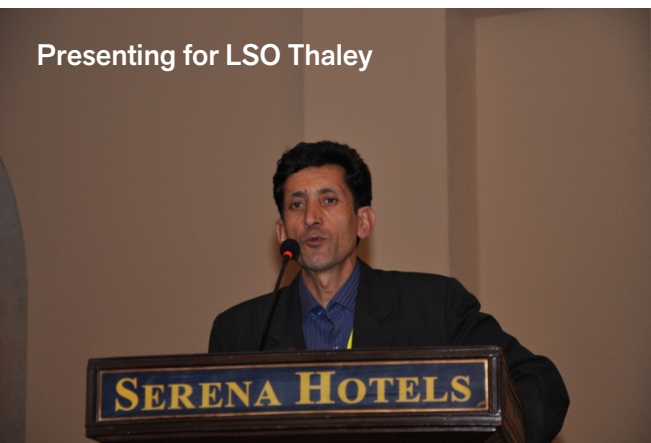
The presenter gave an overview of the LSO's location and profile . LSO Thaley is located in Baltistan and comes under the UC of Thaley. He said that the LSO was formed in February 2007 and that all 1,246 of the households were its members. The LSO consists of a total of 47 VOs (of which 22 are women's VOs) and eight civil society organisations.

Currently the activities that the LSO had carried out were:

- 50 Kanal Land Terracing at a total cost of Rs.2,861,398; total beneficiaries were 114, and this was funded by EC
- Constructed four Irrigation Channels at a total cost of Rs.1,925,776; total beneficiaries were 450 funded by EC/OFDA
- 13 women trained in fruit processing and equipment for this was provided
- 60 men and women trained in modern agricultural practices
- Introduced improved breed of Yak and Bull
- 60 women trained in livestock management
- Planted 10,000 forest plants
- Established Shining Star English Medium School; total students enrolled are 59 – through RSPN
- Provided Rs.40,000 assistance to needy female students with financial support from AKRSP
- Reconstructed four km link road and three jeep-able bridges with financial support from OFDA-USAID through AKF(P);benefiting 1,246 households
- Reconstruction of five bridges and 2,650 feet of protection walls with financial support of Rs.10,700,000 from USAID

Regarding governance, the LSO has worked tremendously to try and improve the situation of governance in their area. Common problems which they faced were:

- Dormant men's and women's VOs
- Low capacity of linkages to public and private organisations by V/WOs



Presenting for LSO Thaley

- Lack of area development plans and slow progress on development work
- Gender inequality

In order to combat these challenges, the LSO registered their LSO under the Companies Act 1984 in order to instil a set of standards within their organisation, reactivated their dormant women and men's VOs, forming new VOs, ensured their LSO's sustainability by introducing membership fees, conducted participatory planning sessions with members, sharing of general and executive bodies meetings' minutes and conducted development planning meetings with external stakeholders as well.

It is with these and other initiatives that LSO Thaley has tried to improve the situation of governance in their area.

Brief Overview of LSONs

Mr. Mohammad Ali Azizi, Specialist Social Mobilisation RSPN started his talk by describing the structure of the LSON Network (LSON). He said that the LSON consists of four tiers; CO at the neighbourhood level, VO at the village level, LSO at the UC level and then the LSON at either the tehsil or district level. The purpose of developing the fourth tier was to assist the LSOs at the UC level in obtaining funds and resources for their communities. Mr. Azizi explained that in the last year and a half, RSPN has been experimenting before they set about forming the fourth tier in order to see whether a tier on top of the LSO would prove too much to manage for communities. As a result, there are now 14 such LSONs which have been formed in Pakistan.

In order to learn from these LSONs, Mr. Azizi recently conducted a study on three LSONs by visiting and observing their operations. Based on his initial findings, the LSONs were functioning admirably by helping its member LSOs to form alliances with larger organisations at the tehsil and district level as well as its role in influencing local government. In terms of action, he gave the example of an LSON being able to generate huge sums of funds in an instant when the floods of 2010 hit. Another example which he gave was of an LSON in Rawalakot which stopped a housing scheme from commencing as it was endangering the forest and wildlife in the area. Instead they were able to change the scheme into a wildlife conservation scheme. He said that an LSO alone would not have been able to stop a large scheme such as the one in Rawalakot.

Presentation by Tehsil LSON Karawan, District Kech

The representatives from LSON Karawan presented the organisational structure and profile of their LSON. They said that the LSON was established in 2010 and the total number of households that it covered was 38,467. Of these, 50% of the households had been organised into its member LSOs. The tehsil covers 17 UCs; 13 of which have LSOs in them and which are members of the LSON. The General Body of the LSON consists of 71 members (of which 26 are women) while the Executive Body consists of 19 members (of which six are women).

The presentation then went onto mention some of the activities of the LSON, which are mentioned below:



The LSONs are functioning effectively by helping its member LSOs form alliances with larger organisations at the tehsil and district level as well as its role in influencing local government.

- Meetings held with local elected representatives to develop an action plan to promote linkages development
- Conducted a district level round table meeting with representatives of local government, civil society organisations and religious leaders. In this meeting local issues were discussed and recommendations were suggested to relevant department and organisations
- Conducted two workshops on peace building and social harmony
- Conducted workshop on youth and voluntarism in which 100 youth from COs and VO's participated
- Conducted an anti-narcotics workshop in which speakers highlighted the dangers of drug abuse and suggested possible activities to avoid them.

One of the representatives from the LSON spoke specifically about what the LSON had done for women and their rights. She said that since the formation of the LSON, people have fought less and made the right decisions instead of fighting and quarrelling all the time. The LSON felt this was because of the two workshops on women's rights and gender biases that they carried out. In addition to this, the LSON also has supported 18 physically-challenged women by providing them with sewing machines. She went on to say that as long as they are organised no one could do anything to them nor could anyone harm them; she said that no nation could progress without helping its women.

The presentation ended with the presenters providing details of the future plan of the LSON, which are to:

- Clean District Kech from drugs and narcotics
- Provide a peaceful environment conducive to the development of the poor people
- Improve the life of the poorest people of District Kech socially and economically
- Promote awareness about gender equality
- Improve quality of education and to increase the literacy rate
- Improve the health of poor people
- Improve agricultural productivity
- Promote social mobilisation especially of women

Brief Talk by Chief of Party, RSPN-ASP

Mr. Ejaz Rahim, Chief of Party of the Assessment and Strengthening Program (ASP) started his talk by saying that ordinary people like him come in this world and make a name for themselves but people like Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan are there to catch people and help and guide them along the way. One cannot replicate institutions but one has to replicate human beings. He talked about a dream that he had; a dream for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Pakistan but he felt that this could only come true if people realised there are two kinds of development. One kind of development is without principles; the concept that if there is money one should spend it and fill the budget. But he said that if one looks at Western democracies, they along with democracy have a social welfare state. And he felt that a democracy without development, social justice and social welfare is no real democracy. Hence a development with principles is what everyone should strive for; it should be a development of the people, by

the people and for the people. He praised the participants and the confidence and excellence in their presentations and compared them to speakers in the British Parliament.



Mr. Ejaz Rahim, CoP ASP-RSPN, addressing the convention participants

Mr. Rahim continued by saying that there were three challenges, to bring democracy on an individual level, national level and in our organisations and all these were found in the strategy of RSPN. People have to decide the way they want to live their lives together, on a community level, village level, UC level and then at the tehsil and district levels. He appreciated that an infrastructure for democratic decision making existed. He attended many board meetings where it was always stated that accountability was very important. Questions arose whether there was a financial system and accountability management. He felt that one should also see if the infrastructure for that accountability, the infrastructure for that management and the infrastructure for decision making at the lowest level exists. Mr. Rahim felt that this was the whole nation's responsibility. He said that the main problem Pakistan was facing was that there were low savings. In the GDP ratio, Pakistan is 156 in the list of about 180 countries. There is no habit of savings among the people of Pakistan; there is no culture of saving.

The second biggest problem is unemployment. Mr. Rahim said that people were unproductive and lacked skills. Pakistan is such an economy where 70- 80% of the people work in the informal sector. People must learn to help themselves; if the seeds are not given attention, then how will trees grow.

The third problem is the population growth of Pakistan said Mr. Rahim. Unless the nation wants to reach a population of 400 million by the year 3000, he said he saw no hope until this message was brought to everyone from the community organisations to village organisations. When an analysis was made it was said that since the last 10 years the fertility rate of Pakistan had been stationary and this cannot be changed without social change. If the development funds are not used for such objectives the population bomb cannot be controlled.

Lastly, he said the fourth biggest problem, poverty, must be addressed. The only way to end this and move forward is to organise people and establish linkages with the government. There must be an infrastructure and money must be spent on organising otherwise nothing will be achieved. "Vitamin D syndrome" that exists in our organisations must be cured and the "dysfunctional, delay prone, decision avoiding, dependency producing, disconnected to outcomes" attitude must be alerted.

In conclusion he thanked all the participants and their efforts and commitments. Amongst praise for all the LSOs, Mr. Rahim especially mentioned LSO Koshish and the community activist from Dir regarding how they had brought about social change, fought terrorism from within the community when the people raised their voices.

Question and Answer Session

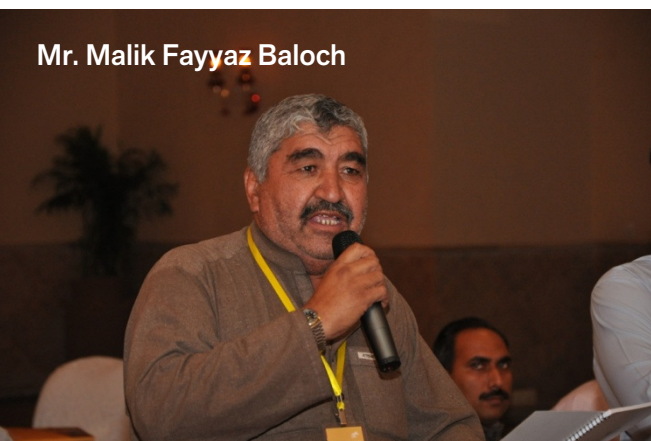
Q. Mr. Malik Fayyaz Baloch from Balochistan, asked the representative from the LSO from Kech, about what they were doing to improve the situation in Meeram dam?

A. The representative answered that in the last meeting they gave a letter to their Minister (which was shown in their presentation) and held a peaceful demonstration even though the danger of bullets was there. They are now trying to create awareness and have sent another letter to the Minister. They could not include all the details pertaining to the Meeram dam in their presentation, as it would have increased the length of the presentation.

Q. Mr. Asif had a question about livelihood and the ports in Gawadar. He said that this was such a big issue and he felt it was not addressed enough. Secondly regarding the issue of drugs, he felt that in the LSON's future plan all they said was that they would show commitment but what exactly would the strategy be? He also asked how were they working on education, as the general opinion was that the FC has taken over all the schools and colleges in Balochistan?

A. The representative from Turbat answered that the port issue was discussed with Quetta Municipal Board and they hope that these issues will be resolved soon. As for the schools, he said that the schools and colleges have not been occupied by the FC; this was misinformation. As for livelihoods, he said that the LSON and its member LSOs were carrying out activities on a self-help basis; for example providing computer skills and internet services to COs and VOs in Gawadar.

Mr. Malik Fayyaz Baloch



Q. Mr. Khan had a question for the representative from USAID, about the LSOs which work at the grassroots levels but are not experts and are not aware of all the procedures required to get loans or aid. Therefore can USAID show some flexibility for them?

A. The representative answered that there was a lot of consideration shown towards LSOs and the evidence to support this is that some of the first organisations which obtained its grants were actually LSOs. He also said that if one compares the ratio of grants given, then from 600 LSOs 19 were given grants and out of 50,000 NGOs, only 14 were given grants. The only issue USAID has is that the grants have to be approved and it takes time for this process. They are holding meetings on this issue and working out how to increase the work and outreach through civil societies.

Closing Session



Distribution of Shields to Presenting LSOs

Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan and other board members of RSPN were asked to distribute shields to the LSOs that had presented during the Convention. Amongst them, three LSOs had earlier on been chosen by the participants as being the three best LSOs of the Convention. The three chosen LSOs were:

- First Position: LSO Umar Kot, Rajanpur presented with a prize of Rs. 500,000
- Second Position: LSO North City, Kharan presented with a prize of Rs. 300,000
- Third Position: LSO Fazil Rural Development, Bhakkar with a prize of Rs. 200,000

Remarks by CEO RSPN

Ms. Shandana Khan started off by saying that all the jewels that Mr. Shoab Sultan had mentioned were indeed shining in front of her and the sight dazzled her as she looked at the convention hall. She said that RSPN was like an LSO for RSPs, which has 11 members; most of which were present there.

Ms. Khan said that the Convention had brought to light many positive things and the progress that women had made was astounding. People are benefiting from organisations and using their own resources and self-help schemes to move forward. She congratulated and thanked everyone for all their efforts, and how they are all responsible for everyone moving forward on this journey towards success.

Closing Remarks by Chairman RSPN

Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan concluded the Convention by presented a brief overview of the events that took place during the Convention. He appreciated all the praise and love that had been expressed for him. He said that his contribution or role in all this was very small and that the actual workers are the people. Mr. Khan said that RSPN had reached the level that it is today because of the people and the efforts they made and that if they would not have utilised

“People are benefiting from organisations and using their own resources and self-help schemes to move forward.”

Shandana Khan, CEO RSPN

the platform given to them, there would have been nothing. He said that running the organisations and LSOs and becoming united and organised was all done by the people, their hard work and courage. They are worthy of all the praise and he was thankful and grateful to all of them. He concluded by saying that to take the programme further, they needed the support of the people and after seeing the presentations and fire of the representatives, he was very optimistic. With this the Convention ended amid a round of applause.

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