

A Study of Local Support Organisation Networks (LSONs) in Pakistan



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List of Abbreviations

ADHO	Assistant District Health Officer
AJK	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
AJKRSP	Azad Jammu & Kashmir Rural Support Programme
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
BoD	Board of Directors
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIF	Community Investment Fund
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CO	Community Organisation
CRP	Community Resource Person
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CMST	Community Management Skills Training
DFO	District Forest Officer
DG	Director General
DM	District Manager
EC	Executive Committee
GBLA	Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly
GAD	Gender and Development
GB	General Body
HRD	Human Resource Development
ID	Institutional Development
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LMST	Leadership Management Skills Training
LSO	Local Support Organisation
LSON	Local Support Organisation Network
MIP	Micro Investment Plan
NIC	National Identity Card
NRSP	National Rural Support Programme
PSC	Poverty Scorecard
RSP	Rural Support Programme
RSPN	Rural Support Programmes Network
SM	Social Mobilisation
SMRT	Social Mobilisation Resource Team
SO	Social Organiser
TMO	Tehsil Municipal Officer
TOP	Terms of Partnership
UC	Union Council
VDP	Village Development Plan
VO	Village Organisation
WAPDA	Water and Power Development Authority
WCO	Women Community Organisation

Background and Introduction:

Networks may be one of the oldest forms of social organization, pre-dating governments, churches, businesses and non-profit and nongovernmental organisations¹. Networking is a mechanism that links people and organisations that share some common goals. The form and structure of networks vary according to their objectives, strategies and actions. However, networking amongst non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) is generally required to share information, to coordinate activities and to join forces for various activities that cannot be undertaken in individual capacities. Hence the definition given below by Haverkort² is considered as a comprehensive definition of civil society networks:

“Any group of individuals and/or organisations who, on a voluntary basis, exchange information or goods or implement joint activities and organise themselves for that purpose in such a way that individual/organisational autonomy remains intact”

Networking of Local Support Organisations (LSOs) at Tehsil and District levels is the logical next step in institutional development of the multi-tier model of Social Mobilisation fostered by the RSPs to create visibility by federating the Community Organisations (COs) at higher levels, for promoting communication and coordination, for building alliances, and for establishing partnerships with government and other agencies to pursue shared development agendas.

The idea of LSO networking first emerged during a brainstorming session in AKRSP's first LSO Convention held in 2008 at Gilgit. The first LSO Network was formed by LSOs of District Chitral in August 2009, followed by District Ghizer LSO Network in October 2009, with support from RSPN.

LSO Network Ghizer was invited to make a presentation in the 2nd National Convention of LSOs organised by RSPN in December 2009 at Islamabad. Inspired by its ideas, LSOs of other areas also demanded RSPs to facilitate them in the establishment of their networks. In the year 2010, RSPN decided to further test the idea of LSO networking. RSPN provided financial and technical support to Chitral and Ghizer LSO Networks to implement some of their planned activities in 2010. Moreover, RSPN provided both financial and technical support to NRSP to form LSO Networks at Mardan and Turbat and to AJKRSP to form LSO Networks at Muzaffarabad. By the end of September 2011, a total of 14 LSO Networks had been formed, 3 in AKRSP's area, 7 in NRSP's area and 4 in AJKRSP's area. Out of the 14 LSO Networks, 3 are District networks while 11 are Tehsil networks.

Unlike the LSO programme, RSPN or the RSPs have given no specific guidelines on the organisational setting up of LSO Networks. Therefore, despite a consensus on the original idea of LSO Networks in RSP areas, there is currently more than one view on their primary objectives, design and degree of formalisation and the right time to

¹ Ashman, Darcy et al. Supporting Civil Society Networks in International Development Programmes. AED Center for Civil Society and Governance, 2005

²Haverkort, Bertus, et al. Networking for Low-external-input and Sustainable Agriculture. Intermediate Technology Publication, London, 1993

start networking LSOs. Some RSP people like to see the LSON as an informal structure to do communication amongst its members and other stakeholders, while others think they should be formal, registered entities with byelaws, offices and defined ownership and authority. Similarly others suggest that networking “should be based on rigorous assessment of the capacity of the UC-level LSOs”.³ Other RSP experts opine that networking itself is a strong tool to enhance capacities of member LSOs. Therefore, it seems the right time to analyse the processes and dynamics of LSO networking which has taken place over the last two years, consolidate it and try to find answers to these questions based on actual experiences from the field. This basically is the rationale behind carrying out this study.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. Document the dynamics and processes of LSON development – the 4th tier in RSPs’ Social Mobilisation
2. Carry out an initial institutional assessment of LSONs
3. Identify conceptual and practical issues and capacity gaps and recommend remedial measures to address gaps

Methodology

The following methodology was followed to carry out the study:

1. Selection of study LSO Networks was carried out on a purposive sampling basis (1 district and 2 Tehsil Networks in 2 RSPs who have a maximum number of LSO Networks in their programme areas i.e. NRSP and AJKRSP). Hence the District LSO Network in Rawalakot in NRSP's AJK programme, the Tehsil Network in Muzaffarabad in AJKRSP's programme area and the Dargai Network in NRSP's KPK programme area, were selected. In addition, three member LSOs in each LSON were also selected randomly, for interviews.
2. Assessment meetings were held with the General Body members of the study LSO Networks. An additional assessment meeting was conducted with the office bearers of the selected LSO Networks. The office bearers were those who had attended the assessment meeting of their LSON. The reason for their selection was that due to their presence in the LSON assessment meeting, they had developed the basic understanding about the purpose and contents of the study. Moreover the researcher was able to brief them about the questionnaire right after the assessment meeting.
3. The study also included meetings with RSP Field Managers and staff and other stakeholders. The RSP staffs were selected on the basis of their direct active involvement in the LSO networking activities.

³ Khan, Mahmood Hasan, “A study of Rural Support Organisations in Pakistan” RSPN 2010

4. In the case of other stakeholders, 10 senior government officials were selected from Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Social Welfare and Health departments and Local Government. The reason for their selection was the fact that the LSO Networks would have to frequently interact with these officials in order to establishing development linkages and accessing resources available with them. Therefore, understanding their views about LSO and LSO Network was considered important for them for framing effective partnership building strategies and plans.
5. Developed questionnaires and LSON profiling formats. Five types of questionnaires were developed. The first was for profiling and analysing the organisational set up and growth of LSONs. The second was made to record the personal profiles and capacity building needs of office bearers of LSONs. The third was meant to record the perception of the relevant staff of RSPs about LSONs. The fourth set was designed to capture the views of the member LSOs about their LSON. And the fifth was to obtain the views and experiences of other stakeholders (government officials, politicians, NGO leaders etc) about the LSONs.
6. The procedure followed to collect data and information was: a) All questionnaires were filled in by the researcher himself. b) Data entry, cleaning and analysis was also conducted by the researcher with the technical support of M&E professionals of RSPN. c) The LSON questionnaire was filled in a meeting in which the majority members of the Executive Committee of the LSON were present. The meetings were held in the LSON offices. d) The LSO questionnaires were filled in meetings of the respective LSOs in their offices⁴. e) The staff questionnaire was given to 16 concerned staff after explaining it to them in a meeting and answering any queries⁵. f) The stakeholders' questionnaire was filled in during personal meetings with 10 senior government officers at their offices⁶. g) Information and data was also collected from written records of the LSONs, where this was available. In case of non-availability of written records, verbal statements of the LSON activists were relied upon. h) All financial and non-financial records of the LSONs were checked to see whether they were properly maintained or not (where available).

⁴ See list of study LSOs in Annex 8

⁵ See list of staff interviewed in Annex 10

⁶ See list of government officials in Annex 11

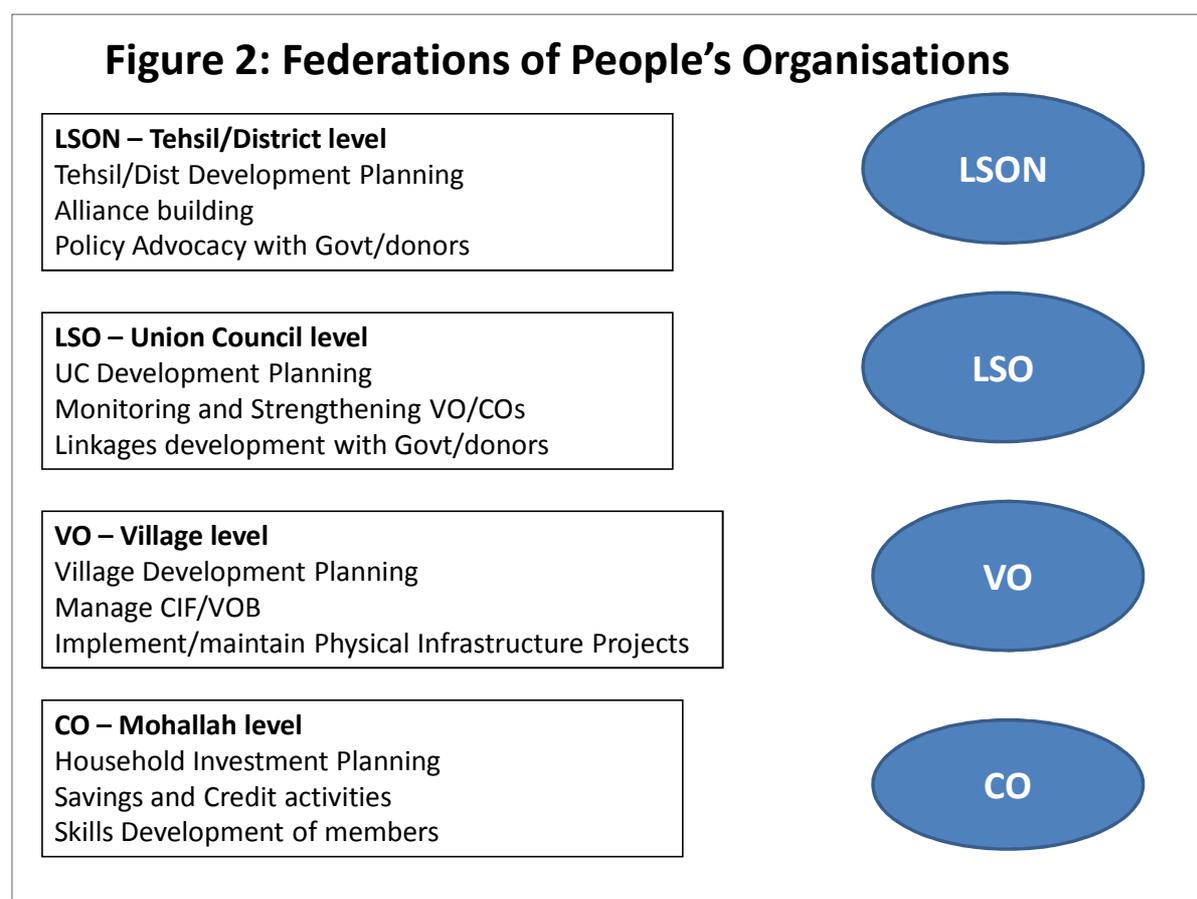
Chapter 1: Rationale of LSO Networks

Networking of LSOs at higher levels is a natural process of organisational development in the multi-tiered structure of RSPs' social mobilisation programme. It is the next logical institutional tier of the three tier model of RSPs' social mobilization at Tehsil and District level and may be later at provincial and RSP levels. Figure 1 below exhibits the RSP wise data about LSO Networks formed by end of September 2011.

Figure 1: Number of LSONs (as of Sept. 2011)

Name of RSP	Total LSONs	Dist Level	Tehsil Level	Mem. LSOs
AKRSP	3	2	1	28
AJKRSP	4	0	4	33
NRSP	7	1	6	85
Total	14	3	11	146

Figure 2 below depicts the institutional hierarchy of LSO Networks or federations of people's organisations, with key roles and responsibilities of each tier in the multi-



tiered model of RSPs' social mobilisation. By following the principle of subsidiarity⁷, the LSO Networks will have to focus on only those issues which are beyond the mandate or competency level of their member LSOs.

The idea of LSO networking was conceived because of the realisation of the limitations of the efforts of individual LSOs in dealing with complex developmental issues at Tehsil and District levels. The organisational mechanisms of LSOs neither provide space to interact freely with other LSOs nor do they allow for effective interaction with the Tehsil and district levels governments. At the LSO level the union level of government has an extremely limited scope, budget and staff and issues raised by LSOs at that level are generally beyond the capacities of the union government. During local government times there were entire union assemblies that LSOs could interact with. However, the LSON concept had not been in the ground then. On the other hand LSO Networks not only provide opportunities for LSOs to interact with government at higher levels but also encourage member LSOs to interact, exchange information, dialogue, take joint action amongst themselves and with other civil society organisations, political parties, other mass movements and campaigns etc. The thinking within the RSPs on LSONs is thus as follows:

- 1. Working with Government:** The Networks could be used as medium to create visibility i.e. taking people's organisations of COs, VO's and LSOs to a higher level, and enhancing their voices. The LSO is a UC level body and most of the government organisations do not have their offices below the Tehsil level. Therefore, unless a higher level body is created, the Tehsil and District level government organisations do not take them seriously. Similarly, the Members of Provincial Assemblies (MPAs) and Members of National Assembly (MNAs) and other politicians, larger NGOs, media, private sector agencies and RSPs also can find LSON a cost effective mechanism to reach out to communities.

⁷ The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) defines subsidiarity as the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.



Picture 1: Assistant DHO Poonch, AJK making a presentation on causes of and possible remedial efforts against Dengue epidemic in an awareness raising workshop arranged for LSON Rawalakot.

2. **Creating a Development Consensus:** Networks could be used as development forums for establishing consensus on development issues. For this purpose, the Network leaders can identify and analyze development opportunities and issues at Tehsil/District levels and articulate shared visions amongst member LSOs and other stakeholders. Thus it can coordinate to establish a common understanding and direction for the Tehsil/District.
3. **Alliance Building:** Networks could be used as a vehicle to build alliances and partnerships by enhancing interaction between various actors in government, civil society, donors, media etc to address Tehsil/District level development challenges.
4. **Lobbying and Policy Advocacy:** Networks could be used as a common platform for lobbying and influencing others, like political parties, political leaders, government, media, religious groups, NGO sector, corporate sector etc for common development agendas and as a force for policy advocacy in favour of the poorest, women and other marginalised groups of the society.
5. **Information Sharing:** Networks could be instrumental common platforms to LSOs for communication amongst themselves, for mutual learning, action planning and policy advocacy. The Network provides a platform to collect relevant information about development issues and opportunities, lessons learnt and success stories etc. from member organisations as well as from other sources, analyse this and disseminate it amongst member LSO. By doing so, the Networks would also facilitate elaboration and sharpening newer development ideas, visions, and perspectives in development.

6. **Strengthening Member Organisations:** Networks could enhance effectiveness and sustainability of its member LSOs by enhancing their capacities and promoting their governance and management standards.
7. **Creating economies of scale:** Networks could create economies of scale for their members in various selling and buying activities, like sale of agricultural and dairy products, handicrafts, home-based industries etc. and bulk purchase of fertilizer, seeds and other agricultural inputs, and raw material for home-based industries etc.



Pictures 2 and 3: LSO Banjonsa, a member of LSON Rawalakot AJK is exporting Gladiolus flower to down country Pakistan under a cooperative marketing arrangement

Chapter 2: The Process of LSO Network Formation

As stated earlier, the original idea of an apex body of LSOs at Tehsil and District levels had come from the communities, i.e. the LSO leaders. The LSO leaders realised the need for a common platform where they could address the higher level development issues, lobby with government and other agencies for pro-people policies and strategies, exchange views and experiences among themselves and coordinate actions for common development activities. In a number of cases, like the LSO Networks in Ghizer, Chitral, Gojal, Rawalakot and Turbat, a group of likeminded LSO leaders formed a coordination committee and started networking activities. But soon they realised the need for engaging all LSOs in the networking web to become a truly representative body at Tehsil/District level, so that they become more effective in achieving their objectives. They, therefore, approached their relevant RSPs for proper guidance and support in this regard. However, in other cases, RSPs themselves floated the networking idea among member LSOs and with their consent, initiated piloting LSO Networks.

In both cases, the RSPs appointed a senior staff as the focal person, who had proper knowledge of LSOs and the three tier structure and basic understanding about networking and linkages development and handed over the task to him/her.

The RSPs organised a workshop for representatives of all LSOs of the relevant Tehsil or District and facilitated discussions and debates among them about the need and importance of LSO Networks, the organisational structure and minimum ratio of women leaders in the LSON bodies, and the basic roles and responsibilities of the LSON and how the LSON would be made accountable to member LSOs. The meeting also extensively discussed the preconditions for formation of LSO Network. In this regards, proper household coverage cross the relevant Tehsil/District and ratio of LSOs formed in total UCs of the Tehsil/District was were given the importance



Picture 4: LSO Networking Workshop facilitated by NRSP in Turbat, Baluchistan

Subsequently, where these pre-requisites were already existed, the LSON formation process was started promptly. However, where the pre-requisite conditions were not available, RSPs drafted action plans to address these issues first, like increase coverage of households in UCs with coverage of less than 50%, formation of LSOs in UCs without any LSOs, increase number of women COs and women leaders in the General Bodies and Executive Committees of LSOs and the like. In areas where the household coverage was low in only few areas, the relevant LSOs were made responsible to achieve the required coverage through their own sources. However, in places where household coverage was low in a number of UCs, RSPs either provided their own money to LSOs or availed funds from RSPN and provided to the relevant LSOs to increase the household coverage in their own UCS as well as in the neighbouring UCs by hiring Community Resource Persons (CRPs) and also to hold workshops to form new LSOs.

Upon successful completion of the preparatory actions, a final workshop was held by the RSPs, attended by 5 to 6 leaders of all potential member LSOs. The LSO leaders discussed and decided on the membership conditions, organisational structure and basic roles and responsibilities of LSO Networks. They decided that irrespective of their size, each LSO would have equal representation in the General Body of the Network. Moreover, the LSO Network would be fully accountable to its member LSOs and would carry out only those development activities which LSOs would not be able to do.

The LSO leaders discussed the agreed points in their own meetings and passed resolutions to join the Network. They also nominated their representatives in the LSO Networks following the agreed criteria. Generally, the LSO that has its office at the Tehsil or District headquarter used to take the responsibility of collecting the resolutions, maintaining records and hosting meetings of the newly formed LSO Networks. After collecting LSO Resolutions they called a meeting of the General Body members of the LSO Network in the LSO office. In this meeting, they elected Executive Committee members and cabinet members of the newly formed LSON. They discussed and decided their objectives, office management systems and collection of funds for the smooth operation of their activities. They then developed their action plans and began to explore fund raising sources to pay the cost of their planned activities plus their offices.

Once they generated enough resources to cover their operational costs, they established independent offices. They also opened bank accounts in the name of the LSO Networks.

Chapter 3: Objectives of LSO Networks

Each of the three study LSO Networks have developed written objectives, and had them approved by their General Bodies. The approved objectives of the LSO Networks have been reproduced here to provide an idea of the common trends in them as well as variations that reflect their specific socio economic and cultural diversities:

Table 1: Objectives of LSONs

Dist. LSON Rawalakot, AJK	Tehsil LSON Dargai, Malakand, KPK	Tehsil LSON, Muzaffarabd, AJK
1) Support in the formation of new LSOs	1) To provide a joint platform to LSOs for mutual communication and coordination	1) Scaling up social mobilisation through low cost, self-sustained measures
2) Capacity building of member LSOs in weak management areas	2) To communicate and coordinate with governmental/non-governmental organizations to promote community development, transparency and accountability and good governance at Tehsil level	2) Advocacy of basic rights
3) Motivate and activate member LSOs to perform better	3) To act as voice of the community and play role of advocacy through identifying issues, gathering facts and figures and communicating to the relevant quarters for necessary action	3) Monitoring of member LSOs
4) Facilitate coordination between LSOs and other civil society organisations and government agencies	4) To submit funding proposals to the development/donor agencies on behalf of LSOs and channelize resources to respective LSOs	4) Financial audit of LSOs
5) Information and experience sharing between member LSOs	5) To provide technical guidance and advisory support to the LSOs in order to make them dynamic, effective, efficient and sustainable using their available resources	5) Promote the cause of gender equality
6) Support in conflict resolution within and between member LSOs as well as between LSOs and	6) To guide the LSOs in order to serve their communities in transparent manner	6) Facilitate development linkages between government, donors and private sector agencies and

other stakeholders		the local communities
7) Organise district/Tehsil level meetings/workshops to discuss development issues and to promote cooperation with government, donors, other civil society organisations and private sector	7) To motivate and support the LSOs in scaling up of social mobilization	7) Provide an institutionalised mechanism for self-help and self-reliance in local communities
8) Develop Tehsil/district level development plans with the participation of representatives from district government, government line departments , other civil society organisations and donors and incorporate them into district government budget and programmes of government line agencies and donors	8) To monitor LSO activities and achievements in development interventions	8) Proper and efficient use of natural and human resources
9) Disseminate research findings of government and other organisations among member LSOs	9) To motivate and assist communities to establish new LSOs in uncovered UCs	9) Capacity building of LSOs regarding record Keeping, office establishment and linkages Development
10) Support member LSOs in their annual planning and incorporate them in district government budget	10) To assist LSOs in project proposals for submission to donor agencies	10) Registration of LSOs
11) Monitoring of programme activities and management of member LSOs	11) To carry out policy advocacy through identifying common issues, raising them with the relevant quarters in government and donor agencies for necessary actions	11) Linkages and coordination between member LSOs
	12) To promote the involvement of youth and women in development activities	12) Advocacy for pro-poor policies by strengthening civic participation in government planning
	13) To motivate and guide LSOs to provide social protection activities to the poorest and destitute	

Analysis of objectives: Analysis of the objectives shows that the number of total objectives of the 3 study LSONs are 36 (Rawalakot 11, Dargai 13, Muzaffarabad 12). Out of them, 4 objectives are shared by all three LSONs while 3 objectives are common across 2 LSONs. Together the common objectives are counted as 18 ($4*3=12 + 3*2=6$). Thus 18 (50%) are individual objectives. For the sake of comparison, I have presented the common objectives in their main themes in the following table:

Table 2: Common Objectives of LSONs

S. No	Objectives	Dist. LSON Rawalakot, AJK	Tehsil LSON Dargai, Malakand, KPK	Tehsil LSON, Muzaffarabd, AJK
1	Capacity building of member LSOs	✓	✓	✓
2	Facilitate coordination between member LSOs and with other stakeholders	✓	✓	✓
3	Information and experience sharing between LSOs	✓	✓	✓
4	Monitor member LSOs	✓	✓	✓
5	Formation of new LSOs		✓	✓
6	Pro-poor policy advocacy		✓	✓
7	Scaling up social mobilisation through member LSOs		✓	✓

Recommendations: The objectives adopted by the LSO Networks are based on their socio-economic needs. They are comprehensive and relevant to their overall mandate. However, instead of spreading their efforts thinly over a longer list of activities they should select few prioritized objectives in the initial years and ensure to achieve the planned results from them before jumping to other objectives. This is also true in the sense that they may not have enough resources at their disposal in the initial stage of their organisational time frame.

Prioritization of LSON objectives by member LSOs: The study tried to capture a prioritised list of LSON objectives by its member LSOs. Instead of directly asking the question, the study asked the 9 sample LSOs to explain their reasons and motives behind joining/forming their LSO Network. The table below shows their reasons for joining their LSON.

Table 3: Reasons of LSOs for joining LSONs

S. No	Descriptions	No of LSO (out of 9 sample LSOs)	%age
1	Communicate and coordinate with member LSOs/wider stakeholders	8	89%
2	Develop linkages with Govt. and donors	7	78%
3	Raise community voices at a higher level	3	33%
4	Experience and knowledge sharing with LSOs	3	33%
5	Resolve higher level development issues	3	33%
6	Resource mobilisation	2	22%
7	Be recognised by Govt. and donors	2	22%

Table 3 shows that the member LSOs consider communication and coordination with stakeholders as the top objective followed by developing linkages with government, donors and private sector agencies. Interestingly, only 2 objectives are common in the lists of common objectives of LSONs and those prioritised by their member LSOs.

Recommendation: The LSO Network, after developing its objectives, should consult its member LSOs to prioritise its objectives and develop a similar list. This prioritised list should be their guideline to focus their efforts on a few selected areas, instead of thinly spreading their efforts over a wide range of objectives.

Chapter 4: Governance Systems in LSO Networks

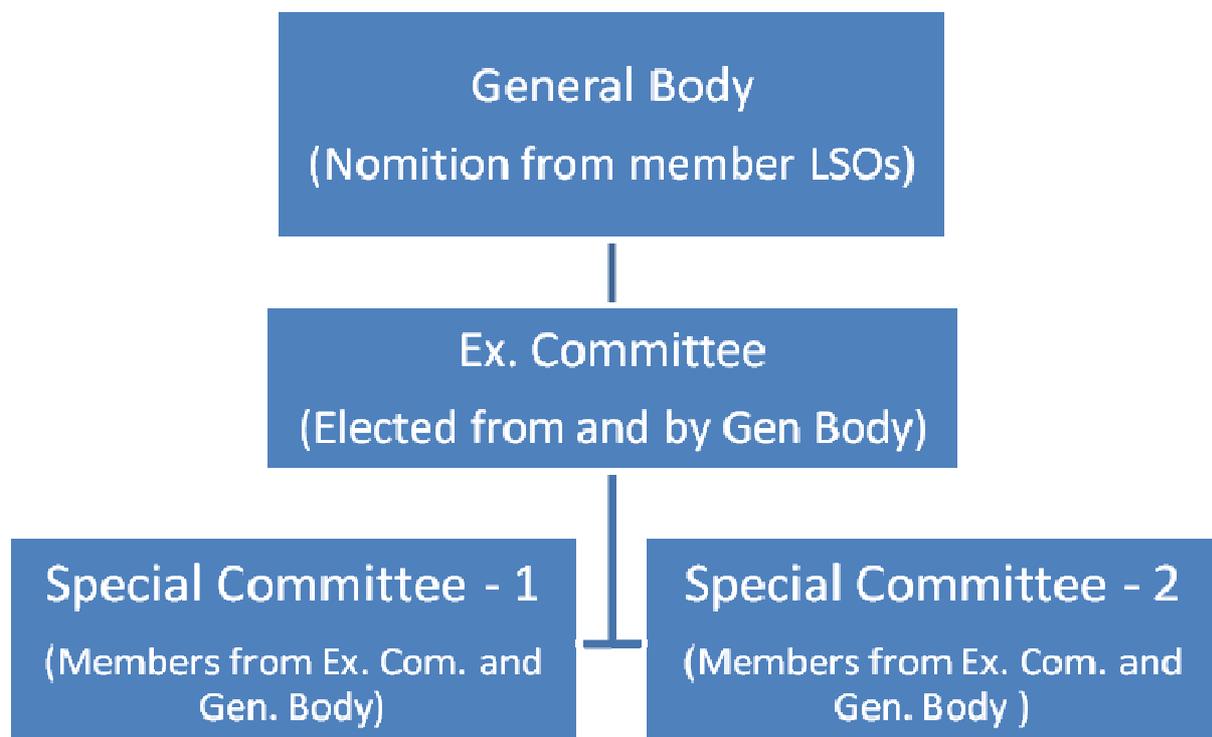
Networks are generally of two types: a) informal, with no bylaws, organisational rules and offices and b) Semi formal, with more defined organisational structures, governed by bylaws and set procedures and, and c) formal with defined organizational structure, written bylaws and registered. As stated earlier, the organisational style is primarily based on the types of goals and objectives the Network wants to pursue. If the Network resolves to do only communication amongst members and other stakeholders, then an informal structure is more suitable. On the other hand, if the Network decides to carry out multiple tasks, especially the implementation of projects, then it must have a more formal structure and a bank account.

Since the study LSOs are all multifunctional organisations, they have rightly decided to set up as formal organisations.

Organisational structure of LSO Networks

Not only is the study LSO Networks but all 14 LSO Networks formed till the time of this study, are formal organisations. The study LSO Networks has two organisational bodies; a) the General Body, and b) the Executive Committee. Moreover, LSON Rawalakot has established special committees. Figure 3 below shows the typical organogram of LSO Networks.

Figure 3: Organisational structure of LSO Networks



LSONs have replicated the organisational set up of LSOs. Therefore, right after formation, they established their offices separately in the District or Tehsil headquarters. LSONs Rawalakot and Dargai drafted written bylaws and got them approved by their General Bodies. In addition, they are working on their registration

under a suitable government registration act. Thus, the organisational set up of these LSO Networks is formal and will be registered.

The General Body: This is the supreme authority of the Network. All major decisions are made and approved by it. Each LSO nominates an equal number of members to the LSON General Body, usually 2 members. The members are generally nominated for a two year period. Re-nomination of the same members after two years is allowed. According to their bylaws, the criteria for General Body member selection includes 1) minimum age limit of 25 years, 2) being a permanent resident of the UC, 3) being an active member in his/her own LSO, 4) a nomination via a written Resolution by the LSO.

Profile of LSO representatives in the General Body of LSO Network: Table 2 shows the profile of LSO representatives in the General Body of LSO Networks.

Table 4: Composition of LSON General Bodies

	No of LSO	%age
Presidents of LSOs	7	78%
Vice Presidents of LSOs	2	22%
General Secretaries of LSOs	2	22%
Finance Secretaries of LSOs	2	22%
Secretaries Information of LSOs	1	11%
Members Executive Committees of LSOs	6	67%
Members of General Bodies of LSOs	4	44%

According to this analysis, a clear preference is given by LSOs to nominate their Presidents to the LSO Network. They are given a clear preference, above all other LSO office bearers.

The Executive Committee: This is elected from and by the members of the General Body of the LSON. The main responsibility of the Executive Committee is to implement decisions taken by the General Body. The nomination criteria for Executive Committee as mentioned in their bylaws includes: 1) a minimum age limit of 25 years, 2) to be a member of General Body, 3) known for honesty, trustworthiness and general good character, 4) a commitment to participatory development, 5) good communication skills.

The Executive Committee elects from its members a cabinet which commonly consist of: 1) President, 2) Vice President, 3) General Secretary, 4) Joint Secretary, 5) Finance/office Secretary and 6) a Press Secretary. The remaining members are ordinary members. However, the cabinet does not meet and take decisions on its own. In fact, all Executive Committee members participate in monthly and other meetings.

Special Committees: The Executive Committee can form special committees to carry out specific functions. In the study LSONs, only Rawalakot has formed Special

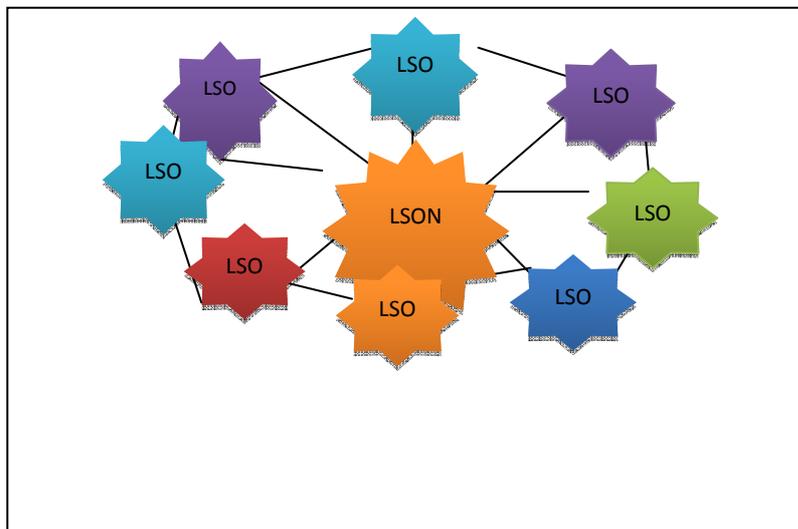
Committees to take care of linkage development, disaster management, agriculture development and coordination among member LSOs as well as with other stakeholders. Members have been nominated both from the Executive Committee and General Body. The special committees have only advisory roles. Their recommendations need to be approved by the Executive Committee and/or by the General Body

Recommendation: Although they have nominated a considerable number of women in the General Body and Executive Committee, there is no clear provision in the bylaws about the ratio of women’s membership in the organisational bodies of the LSO Networks. It is recommended to add a special clause on women’s membership ratio at each organisational body of LSO Networks.

Relevancy of governance system of LSO Networks:

Apparently, LSO Network is an independent body governed by its General Body. However, the reality is that the LSO Network is a formal membership organisation of LSOs⁸. Therefore, the governance structure of the LSO Networks has been designed in such a fashion that it is not only relevant to its functions and activities but also conducive enough to facilitate flow of information to and from its member LSOs. The diagrams below visually demonstrate the governance structure and flow of information and interactions between LSO Network and its members as well as among the members.

Figure 4: Governance Structure of LSO Networks



In the existing structure, the member LSOs have a great say in the decisions of the LSO Networks, because the General Body which is the supreme authority of the Network constitutes members from LSOs. Therefore, there are institutionalised links between the LSO Network and its member LSOs. Moreover, there are no restrictions on the member LSOs to communicate with fellow LSOs independently. Moreover, the networking activities are widely shared by member LSOs and they not only fully take part in networking activities but also bear the financial cost on need basis.

⁸ A formal membership organization has members who can have a say in the structure and priorities of the organization. These members usually have the right to elect board members and officers, and they can approve amendments to the bylaws.

In fact each member LSO is by default, a sub-network for its member VOs and COs. Therefore they carry out sub-networking activities mutually with other member LSOs. This reduces the workload of the LSO Network to many folds. Moreover, it also increases both the speed and quantum of flow of information across LSOs.

Profile of Office Bearers of LSO Networks: In civil society organisations, the office bearers (President, General Secretary, Finance Secretary etc) or cabinet members make their top leadership. In membership organisations, there is the risk of few people occupying the leadership positions in each tier. Table 5 below shows that out of 15 samples LSON office bearers, 80% are office bearers in their LSOs, 8% in their VOs and 9% in their COs. But only 27% people occupy leadership positions in all three tiers. Moreover, only 13% people were office bearers in other civil society organisations.

Table 5: Profile of LSON office bearers in other organisations

Positions of LSON in other organisations	No of LSON Office Bearers	%age
Office bearer in LSO	12	80%
Office bearer in VO	8	53%
Office bearer in CO	9	60%
Office bearer in all	4	27%
Office bearer in other CSOs	2	13%

Recommendation: With the view of providing leadership opportunities to a maximum number of people, the LSO Networks may recommend their office holders to relinquish their posts from their LSOs/VOs. Exception should be allowed in special circumstances, like lack of properly skilled persons in the lower tiers. This would be a strategic move to control certain influential and political figures in LSONs as well as LSOs.

Management skills of office bearers of LSO Networks: Table 6 below shows that 50% of office bearers of LSONs are trained in CMST, but only 13% are trained in LMST. Around 60% office bearers said that they have experiences in implementing projects in education, health, drinking water supply etc, 33% have project management skills and 20% reported to have working experience with Govt. and Donors.

Table 6: Skills of LSON office Holders

Previous Training	No of LSOs	%age
Social Sector Services (Edu. Health, etc)	9	60%
Community Management Skills Training (CMST)	7	47%
Project Management	5	33%
Working with govt and donor agencies	3	20%
Communication	2	13%
Leadership & Management Skills Training (LMST)	2	13%

ToT in Social Mobilization	1	7%
Financial Record Keeping	1	7%
Linkages Development	1	7%
Advocacy	1	7%

Very few office bearers reported having networking skills like communication, linkages development, consensus building, lobbying, and policy advocacy. They badly need these skills. However, a proper Training Need Assessment (TNA) should be carried out for each LSO Network before designing training courses.

Ratio of membership of LSOs in LSON areas: Table 7 below shows that LSOs have been formed in 100% UCs where LSONs exist. In Muzaffarabd, two LSOs each have been formed in UCs Hattian Dopatta and Gojra due to geographic distances in these areas of AJK where communication is extremely difficult. In Rawalakot, the LSO formation in the remaining two UCs of Tain and Singula is also in process. Thus the coverage of UCs is almost 100%.

The table also describes the fact that 100% LSOs formed in the area are member of their LSO Networks. Each member LSO has equal representatives in the General Body of the LSO Network.

Table 7: Membership ratio of LSOs in the LSON area

	Rawalakot	Malakand	Muzaffarabad	Total
Total Union Councils in LSON area	28	12	17	56
No of LSOs formed	26	12	19	57
No of LSOs joined LSON	26	12	19	57
%age of member LSOs in LSON	100%	100%	100%	100%

Household Coverage: LSO Network is generically a community organisation. Household coverage is therefore a key indicator for a strong LSON and is measured through household membership in COs. In the 11th SMRT⁹ meeting, participants suggested that for formation of LSO Networks, there should be at least 50% household coverage in the relevant Tehsil or District. Table 6 shows the household coverage in the areas of LSO Networks studied.

Table 8: Household Coverage in LSON Areas

	Rawalakot	Malakand	Muzaffarabad	Total
Total HHs in LSON area	61,309	24,058	48,707	134,074
Organised HHs in LSON area	32,392	15,750	31,453	79,595
% households organised	53%	65%	65%	59%

⁹ SMRT stands for Social Mobilisation Resource Team. It is the Social Mobilisation think tank of RSPs, with representation from all member RSPs and RSPN and is coordinated by RSPN

The household coverage is just above the mark in Rawalakot District while it is 65% in both Tehsils of Malakand and Muzaffarabd. The LSO Networks realize the importance of increasing household coverage, especially of the poorest. Therefore, they both motivate and facilitate member LSOs in increasing the household coverage which is a healthy sign.

Representation of LSOs in the General Body of LSO Networks: Each LSO has equal representation in the General Body of LSO Network. As Table 9 below shows, the number of representatives varies across LSOs. In the case of LSON Malakand, each LSO nominates 5 members while the AJK LSOs nominate only two members into the General Body of their LSO Networks. However, further analysis revealed that LSON Malakand had originally decided to have 3 members from each member LSO. Very few women members were nominated by LSOs. Therefore, they decided to nominate two women members from each member LSOs taking the total nominated members to 5 per LSO.

Table 9: LSO Representation in LSO Networks

	Rawalakot	Malakand	Muzaffarabad
Total LSOs in the area	26	12	19
No of members nominated by LSOs in the general body of LSON	2	5	2
Total Members in the LSON general body	52	60	38

The LSOs discuss the matter in a formal meeting, pass a resolution to this effect and then submit it to the LSO Network. The LSO Network files the resolutions in its office for record. The members are nominated for two years.

Representation of other civil society organisations in LSO Network: Theoretically speaking, the LSO Networks can engage other like-minded civil society organisations as their members, because the number counts a large in making their voices stronger for lobbying and policy advocacy. However, the leaders of the LSO Networks have serious reservations on making them formal members of their organisations. The demand for membership by other civil society organisations was rejected by LSONs as they felt there was insufficient transparency and accountability in them and their objectives and ethos were quite different from those of the LSOs and the LSO Network.

At Rawalakot the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Community Development Programme (AJKCDP) has established an NGO Network. But due to the lack of any proper membership criteria, all types of NGOs became its members. According to the LSON members, a number of them had no transparent and accountable management systems. They offered membership to LSOs, but they rejected their offer. Based on this and similar other lessons, the LSO members rightly think that membership should not be made open to other civil society organisations without strict written criteria approved by their General Body.

Representation of women in the governing bodies of LSO Networks: So far, no women's LSO Network has been formed and all study LSO Networks are mixed with women and men members. Naturally, in areas where only women COs, VO and LSOs are formed by RSPs, the LSO Networks will also be women only. Equal representation of women should be a key consideration for good governance of mixed LSO Networks. As stated earlier, there is no written policy about the ratio of women membership in the organisational structures of the LSONs. Therefore, the issue was probed in length by the study. The study first tried to see the ratio of women representatives in the General Body, Executive Committee and Special Committees of member LSOs of each Network and then compared these figures with representations of women in the Network.

Table 10: Ratio of women in the governing bodies of member LSOs

S. No	Description	Total	Men	Women	%age Men	%age women
1	Members in General Bodies of LSOs (all member LSOs of the study LSON)	1704	1175	529	69%	31%
2	Members in the Ex. Committees of LSOs (all member LSOs of the study LSON)	653	455	197	70%	30%
3	Members in the Special Committees of LSOs (all members of the study LSON)	50	34	16	68%	32%

Table 10 above shows the ratio of women members in the General Bodies, Ex. Committees and Special Committees of member LSOs are 31%, 30% and 32% respectively.

Table 11: Representation of women in General Body of LSO Networks

	Rawalako t	Malakand	Muzaffarabad	Total
Total GB members	52	60	38	150
Women GB members	20	24	19	63
%age of women GB members	38%	40%	50%	42%

Table 11 above exhibits that the average percentage of women members in the General Bodies of LSO Networks is 42% with the range of 38% to 50%.

Table 12: Representation of women in Ex. Committee of LSO Networks

	Rawalako t	Malakand	Muzaffarabad	Total
Total Ex.Com	7	17	17	41

members				
Women members	3	5	5	13
%age of women members	43%	29%	29%	32%

According to Table 12, the average percentage of women members in the Ex. Committees of LSO Networks is 32% with the range of 29% to 43%.

Table 13: Ratio of women in Special Committees of LSO Networks

S. No	Name of LSO Network	Total	Men	Women	%age Men	%age women
1	Rawalakot	12	8	4	67%	33%
2	Muzaffarabd	0	0	0		
3	Dargai	0	0	0		
4	Total	12	8	4	67%	33%

Table 13 says that the percentage of women members in the Special Committees of LSO Networks is 33%. However, so far, only one Network has elected Special Committees.

Comment: The ratio of women members in the General Body, Executive and Special Committees of LSO Networks are higher than in their member LSOs.

Representation of women in the General Body of the Networks is relatively high compared to their representation in the Executive Committee. The reason given by LSO Network Muzaffarabad was that despite their offer, women members refused to become Executive Committee member because the Ex. Committee meetings are held on a monthly basis and they were not able to make it regularly. In Malakand, where the situation is very unfavourable for women, the LSO Network claims that whatever they have achieved so far is commendable given the socio-cultural set up of the area. The good sign is that they are not satisfied with the current situation and are steadily trying to improve it. For example the Network decided that each member LSO will nominate 2 women members in the General Body of the LSO Network in addition to 3 regular members.



Picture 5 Women leaders of LSON Muzaffarabad

Recommendations: To further improve gender equality in the LSO Networks, 1. Gender training is needed for both women and men along with proper follow up to ensure changes in attitudes. 2. Women members need training on self-confidence building. 3. Affirmative actions are needed to ensure women’s participation, like providing transport and holding meetings at places where women can come easily.

Level of participation of women in the activities of LSO Networks: Critics rightly argue that the inclusion of women in the management bodies of any organisation is not necessarily a sign of women's active participation. The number game could be totally misleading. Therefore, qualitative analysis is necessary to measure actual level of women’s participation.

To assess the level of women’s participation in the activities of LSO Network, both men and women members of the LSO Network present in the meeting were asked to identify women members who were active (regularly attend meetings, take part actively in discussions and decision making, provide suggestions and new ideas, and carry out tasks given to them) and reasonably active (regular in meetings, participate in discussions and debates on and off, and carry out tasks given to them). The table below shows their assessment based on their perceptions.

Table 14: Level of participation of women in General Bodies of LSO Networks

	Rawalako t	Malakan d	Muzaffarabd	Total
Total Women Members	20	24	19	63
No of proactive women members	7	6	3	16
%age of proactive women members	35%	25%	16%	25%
No of adequately active women members	6	13	10	29
%age of adequately women members	30%	54%	53%	46%
Total active women members	13	19	13	45
%age of total active women members	65%	79%	68%	71%

The overall number of 71% ratio of active women in LSON General Body is encouraging. The reason is that the women leaders who willingly accept membership at such a high level of organisational set up are never ordinary women. They are literate, and are playing strong leadership roles in their own LSO, VOs and COs. They have gone through several training courses and have enough exposure to development activities working with RSPs as well as with other NGOs.

However, this is an interesting area and need to be further explored more systematically to understand the common factors that positively contribute towards leadership development in women.

Ratio of poor members in the LSO Network: There is a widespread fear among RSPs that the higher level structures of the people's organisations may systematically exclude the poor. Their argument is based on the fact that poor members generally lack education, training and exposure which are the basic criteria for nomination in the General Body of the LSO and LSO Network. Moreover, being a voluntary set up, the members have to bear the cost of transportation and other costs themselves. Poor people may not be able to bear the cost of participation. Therefore, they may voluntarily allow relatively better off members to take the leadership positions in the higher bodies.

However, the research confirms none of these hypotheses. On the contrary, a relatively very high number of the Executive Committee members were found to be from poor even poorest families. Table 15 below shows the ratios.

Table 15: Representation of poor and poorest members in Ex. Committee of LSO Networks

	Rawalako t	Malakan d	Muzaffarab ad	Total
Total Ex. Body members	7	17	17	41

Poorest members	0	2	4	6
%age of poorest members	0%	12%	24%	15%
Poor members	7	5	7	19
%age of poor members	100%	29%	41%	46%
Total poor and poorest members	7	7	11	25
%age of poor and poorest members	100%	41%	65%	61%

Due to lack of poverty scorecard data, the analysis has been conducted through participatory appraisal method. It is suggested to carry out the analysis using poverty scorecard data in future studies.

Meetings of LSO Networks: The General Body of the LSO Networks generally holds its meetings twice a year or on needs basis, and the Executive Committee meets on a monthly basis. The meetings are held in the office of the LSO Network. Before the establishment of the offices, meetings were held either in one of the LSO offices or at the RSP office.

The meetings are held regularly. The minutes of meeting is recorded in the minute's book. However copies of minutes are not circulated to LSON members and other, relevant stakeholders. However, all actionable information and decisions are communicated through other means like telephone call and text messages.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the minutes of meetings are circulated in writing among member LSOs and other relevant stakeholders regularly.

Monitoring of member LSOs: LSO Networks have formed a committee to monitor the performance of their member LSOs. The committee consists of 3 to 5 members. The committee visits the member LSOs during their monthly meetings. The committee checks attendance and quality of proceedings of their meetings, minutes of past meetings and recommends improvements. The Committee also checks their financial records and helps improve them. The Committee shares these experiences and lessons learnt in the LSO Network meetings for the benefit of other members.

LSON Dargai has decided to obtain monthly progress reports from member LSOs. This is a good management tool to ensure both efficiency and transparency of the member LSOs. However, this would increase the work load of the President and the General Secretary of both the LSOs and the Networks substantially. Therefore, the progress reports should be kept simple.

Capacity building of member LSOs: The LSO Networks improve the capacity of its members through arrangement of proper training events if resources are available. Otherwise, the monitoring team, that include capable people in general management

issues like financial record keeping, planning and project management give on the job training to LSO activists.

LSO Networks Rawalakot and Muzaffarabd arranged formal training courses to activists of all member LSOs in financial record keeping and proposal writing. LSO Network Dargai provided technical support to 8 member LSOs in establishing Micro Credit System on Akhuwat model. All study LSO Networks provided technical support to a number of their member LSOs in their registration under a suitable act.

Recommendation: Capacity building is a serious issue for both the LSO Networks and their member LSOs. It should be the responsibility of the relevant RSPs to undertake capacity need assessment exercises to systematically identify their capacity building needs and then plan and implement capacity building programmes for them with their full engagement.

Bank account and its signatories: LSONs Dargai and Muzaffarabad have opened official bank accounts. LSON Rawalakot was in the process of opening a bank account at the time of the study visit. All bank accounts are operated jointly by two designated signatories. LSON Muzaffarabad has nominated a female signatory as well.

Recommendation: Financial disbursement and withdrawal authority is a key element of empowerment. Therefore, all LSONs must nominate women signatories for their bank accounts.

Contribution of members to the LSO Networks: Members' contribution in the form of membership fee is a key indicator of their ownership of the organisation. At the same time such a contribution is a measure of creating accountability in the apex organisation towards its members. Therefore, irrespective of the size or quantity of the contribution, the mere practice of nominal membership fee is a healthy sign of good governance in voluntary organisations.

The LSO Networks have established their own offices. Once they are engaged in activities and deal with money, they will need a trained and paid book keeper for financial record keeping. In other words, each LSO Network has to pay ranging between Rs. 15,000 to 25,000 per month as overhead cost. Therefore, membership fee is a key element in the sustainability of LSO Networks.

LSON Dargai has introduced membership fee of Rs 2,000 per month on member LSOs. LSON Rawalakot and Muzaffarabad have been collecting monthly contributions from the general Body members at the moment, but are planning to collect fee from member LSOs in near future.

Mechanism for downward accountability: SO Networks are membership organisations of LSOs, VOs and COs and it is critical that their accountability to their members organisations remains strong. Be it the President of the LSON or members of the Executive Committee and General Body, they are also active members of their LSOs, VOs and COs. Therefore all member VOs and COs are

institutionally linked to LSONs. This is a most unique feature of the LSO Networks.

In this kind of organisational set up, the establishment of systems for upward and downward information flows are relatively easier and cost effective. However, experience in LSOs suggests that upward communication is easier, but downward information flow is difficult and costly. The main reason is that in the case of upward communication, the cost of communication is easily born by the member organisations, as all they have to do is to write a resolution or prepare information and submit to its higher tiers. In case of data and information required by upper tiers, the lower tiers compile them, make one or two copies and submit to the upper tiers. But for downward communication, the target number of member organisations and other stakeholders are numerous, and at times in hundreds. Therefore, written communication, even in the form of photocopies to all CO members, is costly.

Recommendation: The LSO Networks should consider the below mentioned cheaper forms of communications to remain engaged with its members, stakeholders and the general masses. 1) text messaging urgent information, 2) emailing minutes of meetings and other important decisions or information 3) publication of newsletters 4) publication of key decisions and information in local print media 5) putting up information outside the LSON offices on a public notice board.

Chapter 5: Management Systems of LSO Networks

Being a formal organisation, LSO Network will require a set of formal management systems. According to their bylaws, the General Body is responsible to make and approve all management decisions. The Executive Committee and the Special committees are accountable to the General Body and they are responsible to implement the decisions made and approved by it.

Management policies and procedures: Besides the bylaws, the study LSO Networks have not developed any special management policies and procedures, like for finance and audit, gender mainstreaming, project management and monitoring etc, which they will have to develop in future once they are properly established and start doing projects. These are considered as essential capacity and management standards for formal civil society organisations.

Office Management: Generally the LSO Networks initially start their activities from the office of a member LSO who has its office place in a central location easily accessible to the majority of their members. Later on they set up their separate office after securing necessary financial arrangement to pay the office costs. Initially the members of the General Body contribute monthly donations to meet the office expenses. Later on they collect membership fee from member LSOs to cover the overhead costs. The General Secretary is mainly responsible for the official records while the Finance Secretary safe keeps cash and financial records besides maintaining financial records. The bank account, once opened is operated jointly by the President and the Finance Secretary.



Picture 6 Members of LSON Dargai, Malakand holding their monthly meeting in their office

Visioning Planning and Budgeting: Each LSO Network has chalked out a simple work plan that list downs their prioritized activities in future. But no systematic work plans with budget figures are available with them. This is a serious management flaw and they need to resolve it.

Organisations are governed by their bylaws and driven by a vision. The budget is both a planning and controlling and monitoring tool. Therefore, without visions, plans and budgets, no significant achievements could be expected from the LSO Networks. As the saying goes 'if you fail to plan, you have planned to fail'. RSPs, therefore, should help LSO Networks develop a proper plan and budget in consultation with its member LSOs and get them approved by its General Body and hand over them to the Executive Committee for implementation. Relevant parts of the Manual on Organisational Development of LSOs published by RSPN could be used for practical guidance.

Record keeping: Each LSO Network has minute books where the minutes of their meetings are recorded by their General Secretary. They have a simple filing system to safe keep their official documents. All official records are kept in the LSO Network office.

Financial Management: None of the study LSO Networks has any endowment fund or other permanent source of income. Initially, the members of the General Body or the members of the Executive Committee makes monthly contributions to cover the overhead costs, like office rent, stationery and photocopying, entertainment etc. In the case of LSON Dargai, RSPN provided funds for office establishment and also to pay office rent for one year, because it was implementing a social mobilization programme with its financial support. However, after the project came to an end, the LSO Network decided to collect monthly contribution of Rs. 2,000 from member LSOs to compensate its overhead costs.

The LSO Networks should generate funds from member LSOs as membership fee. Moreover, they should also explore other permanent sources of income to cover their overhead cost. Till that time, they should operate from any LSO office. Alternatively, member LSOs should host LSO Network in their office on turn, say for one year. In this way they would be able to save a significant portion of their overhead costs. The third option could be to share the rented accommodation of one of its member LSOs.

Financial Record keeping and Audit of Accounts: The Finance Secretary maintains the financial records of the LSO Networks. LSON Dargai has a complete set of financial records because it had to implement a project and maintain its financial record for financial reporting to NRSP and RSPN. LSONs Rawalakot and Muzaffarabad maintain a Cash Book because till this point in time, they have very few financial transactions.

LSON Rawalakot has formerly been established in July 2011, so it doesn't need financial audit this year. However, LSONs Muzaffarabd and Dargai had been formed in February and March 2010 respectively. Therefore, they need audit of their

accounts by any external auditing firms. The leaders of the Networks realise the importance of financial audit. They are planning first to ask their partner RSPs to audit their accounts and advise them on course corrections. After that they will get their accounts audited by a certified audit firm.

Recommendation: Financial record keeping is the key determinant of transparency and accountability. Therefore, LSO Networks should take it seriously and maintain an official receipt book, a cash book and a ledger to record its financial transactions systematically according to accounting standards and rules. Moreover, audit is a legal requirement for all registered firms and a crucial means of ensuring transparency and accountability and winning the confidence of members and public at large. Till the time that the LSOs and LSONs become financially able to get their accounts audited from recognised auditing firms, the RSPs should audit their accounts regularly. On the other hand, the LSO Network is going to be the leading civil society organisation to promote the cause of transparency and accountability across government organisations, NGOs and even in private sector organisations at Tehsil/District level. Therefore, they should first put their own house in order.

Human Resource Profile of LSO Networks: In essence the role of a network is quite different from the member organisations. Therefore, it is important to learn how many people are available to perform the specific roles of Networks. Tables 16 and 17 exhibit the human resources profile of the study LSO Networks to carry out their networking roles and responsibilities.

Table 16: Skilled and trained people in LSO Networks

Capacity Areas	Trained people	
	Total	Average per LSON
Communication: – collection, analysis and dissemination of development information among member organisations, stakeholders, media and across the wider civil society	32	11
Lobbying/ influencing others: – political parties, political leaders, media, religious groups, NGO sector, corporate sector, local government etc.	53	18
Consensus building: – identifying and analysing opportunities and issues and articulating shared visions and solutions	49	16
Alliance and partnership building: – enhancing interactions between various actors – civil society, media, donors, government etc	46	15
Capacity building of member and partner organisations, beneficiary groups in various fields	50	17
Membership management: – keeping the members active, making them accountable, contributing in their activities without controlling them	47	16

According to Table 16 the study LSONs have quite a good number of trained people in each capacity area. However, they have relatively lesser trained people in communication and mobilizing alternative resources.

Table 17: Level of skills in LSO Networks

Capacity Areas	Trained people			
	Total	V. Good	Adqt	In-adqt
Communication: – collection, analysis and dissemination of development information among member organisations, stakeholders, media and across the wider civil society	32	3%	34%	63%
Lobbying/ influencing others: – political parties, political leaders, media, religious groups, NGO sector, corporate sector, local government etc.	53	9%	91%	0%
Consensus building: – identifying and analysing opportunities and issues and articulating shared visions and solutions	49	8%	92%	0%
Alliance and partnership building: – enhancing interactions between various actors – civil society, media, donors, government etc	46	22%	78%	0%
Capacity building of member and partner organisations, beneficiary groups in various fields	50	14%	86%	0%
Membership management: – keeping the members active, making them accountable, contributing in their activities without controlling them	47	21%	57%	0%
Mobilize alternative resources: – both from internal and external sources	39	10%	59%	31%
Promote linkages: – bringing together like minded individuals, groups and institutions around shared development agendas	81	2%	98%	0%
Mobilize alternative resources: – both from internal and external sources			39	13
Promote linkages: – bringing together like minded individuals, groups and institutions around shared development agendas			81	27

Note: V. Good (Very good, need no further training); Adqt (Adequate, meaning enough capacity to carry out the tasks but need further training); In-adqt (In-adequate, meaning not enough training to carry out the tasks, hence need proper training).

Table 17 shows the quality of the trained people available with the Networks. According to this table, 63% of the trained people are poorly trained in communication and 31% are poorly trained in mobilizing resources from alternative sources. So these seem the weakest capacity areas of the LSONs. However, further analysis shows that 98% of trained people in promotion of linkages, 92% in consensus building, 91% in lobbying/influencing others, 86% in capacity building and 78% in

alliance and partnership building also need further training as they are only adequately trained.

The capacity profile analysis is based on a PRA method. Therefore, these figures should be taken as indicative. It is suggested that RSPs should carry out proper capacity need assessment of the LSO Networks using these results as guidelines.

Chapter 6: Major activities and achievements of LSO Networks

The LSO Networks are mainly in their initial stages of formation. As stated earlier, they have not yet chalked out proper plans and budgets. But despite these weaknesses, they have done several activities on their own initiatives. Some LSO Networks even received external funds to carry out programme activities through their member LSOs. Below is a list of some major activities carried out by the Networks.

Communication: The LSO Network has become a platform for communication both within member LSOs and with other stakeholders. Some examples:

1. During the 2010 flood, some members of the LSO Network Dargai saw the devastating effects in their neighbourhood. They immediately called an emergency meeting and mobilised member LSOs for flood relief activities within 24 hours. They provided food items, both cooked and non-cooked to 2,961 households, clothing and shoes to 5,275 households and crockery and other food items to 964 households. Thus they managed to serve relief items to a total of 9,200 households. The net value of these relief items comes to around Rs. 3,126,000.
2. When some influential people in Rawalakot AJK, tried to grab the valuable land surrounding Lake Banjonsa, a tourist attraction in the area, for a housing scheme, the LSO Network briefed politicians and media on its adverse environmental and socio-economic consequences for the locals. They published several news items and articles in local newspapers against the scheme and managed to cancel it. (see Box 1 for more details)
3. When the Dengue epidemic was at its peak during August 2011, some patients were identified at Bagh AJK. The AJK government started a health awareness campaign against Dengue. In District Poonch, which was one of the suspected areas for Dengue due to wide spread rice fields in the lower areas, the Assistant District Health Officer (ADHO) held a half day meeting with the LSO Network Rawalakot and briefed them about the signs and symptoms of Dengue viral disease, precautionary measures for the suspected patient and contact numbers in the health department for necessary guidance and support if needed. The representatives of 26 LSOs present in the meeting pledged to form a health committee in each Union Council for streamlining communication.
4. The members of the LSO Networks regularly visit government officials to brief them about their objectives and plans as well as to learn about potential resources and services available with them. These meetings gradually lead to securing development resources for their member LSOs as well as establishing working relations with them.
5. The Network platform is also widely used for experience sharing among member LSOs. LSO Kot Mina shared its experience in Akhuwat model of Islamic micro

financing with fellow LSOs and now others are adopting this model. LSO Shaheen had a working relationship with DOST Foundation, a Peshawar based NGO mainly working against drug addiction. The LSO shared its experiences with other LSOs and consequently, all other member LSOs contacted the NGO to get health services.

Scaling up Social Mobilisation: At the time of formation of the LSO Networks, some UCs had no LSOs mainly due to low household coverage. The LSO Networks supported the community activists of such areas in scaling up household coverage. In areas where resources were made available by the RSP or RSPN, the LSO Networks facilitated in training Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who then organised the uncovered households in men and women Community Organisations (COs). Where external resources were not available, the local activists encouraged to organise the remaining households in existing COs or form new COs at neighbourhood level. After increasing the overall household coverage and reaching all villages in the UC, the LSO Network also facilitated formation of LSOs in these areas.

Capacity building of member LSOs: The member LSOs of Networks are quite different from each other in terms of management capacity and skills. Some LSOs, especially the newly formed ones are less mature in organisational management than the rest. The LSO Network realized this and decided to improve the capacities of the weaker LSOs at par with the mature ones. Though due to lack of resources they have not yet been able to carry out any significant capacity building programme for their weaker partners, each study LSO Network had implemented financial record keeping and proposal development training to their members with financial and technical support of the RSPs.

Some LSO Networks have established a committee of experts who visit member LSOs on turn during their monthly meetings and pin point governance and management related issues and guide them to resolve them. They also help the LSO in maintaining its financial record if needed.

LSO Network Dargai had received Rs 12 million endowment fund from RSPN. The Network gave Rs one million each to its 12 member LSOs for on lending to their members as Community Investment Fund (CIF). But their members were not ready to take loans from it by paying interest. LSO Kot Mina, one of their members, was already using its endowment fund received from RSPN in 2007 for lending to its members on Akhuwat model, which is an Islamic mode of micro finance. The LSO Network introduced the model to others and they also agreed to adopt it. However they needed proper training in the Akhuwat model. The Chairman of the LSO is from Kot Mina, and he offered his services free of cost. Moreover, two more Executive Committee members of LSO Network volunteered their services for the same cause. They first received training from LSO Kot Mina and then joined the Chairman. These three activists had so far facilitated implementation of Akhuwat model of microfinance in 8 more LSOs.

Registration of LSOs with government acts is a difficult, time consuming and expensive task. The LSO Networks, therefore, support their member LSOs in their

registration by giving them information, helping them in documentation and using their clout at the registration office people.

Monitoring of member LSOs: One basic membership condition of the LSO Network is that the LSO is and will remain active. To ensure that the LSO Networks regularly monitor their members. Initially, they form a committee of experts, generally lead by the President of the LSON, which visits the members on turn. They generally visit the LSOs during their scheduled monthly meetings. By attending the meetings, they learn about both their strengths and weaknesses. They not only point out these weak points to the LSO management, but also guide them about how to resolve them.

Linkages development: LSO Networks facilitate member LSOs in linkages development with various government and non-government agencies. For example, in Malakand, LSON Dargai contacted the project staff of DTCE and invited them to visit their office. As a result of their efforts, DTCE is now implementing its community development projects through all member LSOs. The Network leaders held meetings with their Provincial Assembly member, who supported them in receiving 52 wheel chairs from District Bait-ul-Maal for disabled community members. Moreover, the Network contacted DOST Welfare Foundation, a Peshawar based NGO and arrange free medical camps in all 12 LSOs. The medical camp also had the facility to test Hepatitis A and B which are widely spread in the area.

Youth Development: Youth being the major part of the population have always kept out of development process and thereby huge gap is created between different age classes. LSO Networks are carrying out youth development activities in partnership with their member LSOs. For example District LSO Network Chitral arranged a Tehsil level one day youth convention at Booni, headquarter of Tehsil Mastuj, Chitral with financial support of RSPN. The event was managed by a member LSO, Biyar Local Support Organization (BLSO). Over 50 educated and uneducated male and female youth of the area participated in the youth convention program.

The purpose of the event was to build confidence of youth and to involve youth in the village and women organization (VO/WO) in decision making and to create awareness among youth about their rights and responsibilities. All the relevant issues and solutions and suggestion were highlighted. And it was mutually agreed in the convention that the main focus will be given to the creating awareness among youth regarding their right and responsibilities. Finally youth demanded to ensure their participation in the LSO's so that they can play active role in the development process.

LSO Networks arrange recreational facilities and festivals for youth. LSON Dargai successfully lobbied to acquire a public land worth Rs 80 million for construction of a playground at Dargai town. Moreover, the Network organised cricket and volley ball tournaments between member LSOs. The member LSOs shared the cost of tournaments. The sport activities were deliberately organised during summer vacations when schools and colleges were closed, so that students can enjoy these

refreshing activities. Moreover, drug abuse is widespread in youth of the area, and a major cause for drug addiction is non-availability of healthy activities. Sports activities provide healthy environment, competition and challenge to youth that help divert their attentions from destructive practices such as drug use.

LSO Network Karwan Turbat arranged a workshop at Tehsil Level to sensitize the local communities about the social issues of drugs, in which 52 people from 13 member LSOs participated. The speakers highlighted drugs related issues and suggested possible actions to control them.



Picture 7 A walk against drug abuse arranged by LSON Karwan, Turbat

Promote peace and social harmony: Up until the 1970s Pakistan was a tolerant and peaceful place. The more recent violence and intolerance has weakened social ties and values of the people of Pakistan. Chitral, once a very peaceful area, is now also facing sectarian challenges and a threat of extremist groups from neighboring KPK and Afghanistan. In this regard the LSO Network of Chitral conducted four peace building programmes in partnership with LSOs Ayun Valley Development Program (AVDP), Garamchashma Area Development Organization (GADO) and Biyar Local Support Organization (BLSO). The activities included debate programmes in schools, radio talk shows and awareness workshops for the organized communities.

At the time of the intrusion of the extremist groups in Swat and Dir, the LSO Network Chitral organized a multi-stakeholder workshop at Chitral town in which leaders of political and religious parties, civil society, media, intellectuals and other opinion makers were invited to discuss the emerging extremist threat to the Chitral community. The stakeholder workshop unanimously resolved to strongly fight against the extremists and in that way saved Chitral from becoming the next target of the terrorists.

Moreover, the LSO Network has been pursuing different strategies and activities to actively engage the Kalash community, a native non-Muslim minority group, into the

mainstream development of Chitral region. The activities of social harmony and peace building taken by the LSO Network in Chitral was widely appreciated by the District Nazim, who promised to provide full support from the local government including provision of funding for such type of activities in future.

Alliance and Partnership building: The author held meetings with a number of government officials were held to assess their views on LSONs and the links of LSONs with government. This included the DG Livestock, Director Agriculture and Conservator Forest at AJK and Tehsil Administrator at Dargai, Assistant Director Agriculture, District Forest Officer, Superintendent Social Welfare and Assistant District Health Officer District Poonch to discuss the potential role of LSO Networks related to their fields of operations. Each one of them expressed their keen interest for joint actions with the LSO Networks. Their main problem is accessing their target households in a cost effective manner. In this regard, the LSO Network could be extremely helpful for their outreach. For example, DG Livestock said that though his department has a number of filed staff, but they are not sufficient to serve the large numbers of livestock in their respective areas. Similarly, the DFO Rawalkot said that the local communities are responsible to help Forest Department in conservation of natural forest in their respective areas, and as compensation for these services, they are entitled for dead and fallen trees. But due to lack of trust and proper mechanisms, neither the community provides its services nor the Forest Department fulfil their obligations. As a result of that, it is extremely difficult for the Forest Department to protect illegal felling of trees, let alone planting new trees to bring barren areas under green belts. DG Livestock and Conservator Forest showed their interest to send their representatives in the monthly meetings of LSO Network. The Department of Agriculture Muzaffarabad has signed two MoUs with AJKRSP for joint implementation of two 5 year projects in partnership with LSON Muzaffarabad.¹⁰ The first project will run in 14 Union Council, of which 5 are in Tehsil Muzaffarabd, and the second project will run in 8 Union Councils of Muzaffarabad. AJKRSP has decided to hand over the tasks of providing list of interested LSOs/VOs, organise vegetable growers and assess their training needs in consultation with technical persons from Department of Agriculture, ensure in-time demand of inputs from farmers and monitor their proper utilization to LSO Network Muzaffarabad. The LSO Network will carry out these activities through its member LSOs. In the remaining 9 UCs, AJKRSP is partnering with 9 different LSOs because there were no LSO Networks.

Public Policy: Networks are tactfully using their resources for lobbying and influencing government and other actors in favour of projects and programmes of larger public interest.

LSON Ghizer, for example, successfully campaigned against intruders from the neighbouring district, who used to rob their animals from summer pastures and injure and even kill those who dared to resist them. During 2009-10, the LSO Network prepared a video documentary and recorded experiences, feelings, complain

¹⁰The first project is supply of quality inputs to farmers. The project will bear the cost of transportation; buy certified and quality inputs directly from government research centers and factories to ensure quality and purity. Moreover, the government will offer interest free loan for buying inputs. The second project is about kitchen gardening. The project will provide training, seeds, fertilizer and pesticides to the selected vulnerable families in doing kitchen gardening.

and suggestions made by the victims, local political and religious leaders and government functionaries. They showed the video to top government officials, politicians and other opinion makers in a day long workshop arranged at the district headquarter and discussed the issue of external intrusion with them. They also made dialogues with the government officials, representatives of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly (GBLA) civil society leaders in Gilgit as well as in the neighbouring District. As a result of these public policy efforts, the government of Gilgit-Baltistan deployed police force in the affected areas and the people are now grassing their animals safely in the high pastures.



Picture 8 A scenic view of Lake Banjonsa, Rawalakot, AJK

In another example, LSO Network Rawalakot successfully campaigned for cancelation of a housing scheme started at a tourist resort at Union Council Banjonsa, AJK. The housing scheme had serious socio economic and environmental consequences for the local people. The full episode of how this campaign went is given in Box 1 below.

Tehsil/District level planning: Networks are planning to develop Tehsil/District level development plans in consultation with local government, other government line agencies, donors and private sectors. Such a consensus building effort on development challenges would greatly help the Networks in fund raising. Moreover, the planning document, if endorsed by all parties, could be used as a control measure to check the allocation efficiency of available resources with different agencies. Ultimately, if used properly and systematically, the planning document could play a significant role in improving the good governance at local level.

Box: 1

A successful campaign to protect the Green Belt and Lake Banjonsa

Banjonsa is a magical, enchanting place for tourists all over Pakistan. It has a beautiful lake surrounded by thin forests. Scores of tourists come here every year causing a sea of change in the economic life of common folk here. The total population of Banjonsa is 16,553 and total household are 1,532. The majority of its inhabitants are poor, with one or two earning persons and 6 to 7 dependents. In spite of natural beauty and immense economic potential in terms of tourism development, no substantial planning to develop infra and super structure of the area has been chalked out by the Government. However, it has always been the attention of political and elite class.

In the year 2010, Pearl Development Authority (PDA) a public department for local development, launched a housing scheme near the Banjonsa Lake in connivance with politicians and bureaucrats. They wanted to get the plots allotted to possess this public asset. The local community deemed it a very nefarious activity as it has economic, social and cultural repercussions for them. The communities were of the view that the proposed scheme might damage forest and the green belt. Moreover, the liquid and solid waste of the housing scheme may affect land, water, air and other components of the sensitive and precious environment of the area.

At that time the LSO Network was not established formally. However, it was working in an informal set up. The Network used to meet on need basis to discuss, decide and take actions on specific issues of common interest.

LSO Banjonsa, under whom jurisdiction the Banjonsa Lake is situated, took the lead to oppose the proposed housing scheme. They discussed the agenda on LSO Network forum and resolved for joint actions. Besides separate meetings with like-minded politicians and government officials, they published several news items and articles in the local newspapers highlighting the devastating affects the housing scheme would have on the environmental degradation of the area and economic losses to the poor people of the area who had been engaged in tourism related businesses. Finally they decided to conduct a walk, to save Banjonsa Lake, with the participation of people from all walks of life. A committee was formed to arrange the walk.

The committee worked day and night and arranged the walk on 25 July 2010 in which the General Manger of NCHD and his other staff members, representatives of LSO Network, members of District Poonch NGO Network, activists of LSO Banjonsa, VO's and CO's, local politicians from all political parties, students of Azam-e-No Public School, and correspondents of Daily Jang, Ausaf, Nawa-e-Waqat and FM Vok 105 participated. The walk started from Banjonsa Bazar and traveled one kilometer on foot and ended near the bank of Lake Banjonsa. A public gathering was held here which was addressed by representatives of all major participating groups. They condemned the proposed housing scheme and demanded to stop it and cancel the allotted plots with immediate effect.

This issue was widely highlighted in the media. A delegation, comprised of LSO Banjonsa and LSO Network members, went to meet the sitting members of constituency, Sardar Yaqoob Khan, and Sardar Sayab Khalid and impressed upon them to table a law in which no construction activity would be made at least two kilometers around Banjonsa Lake. Similarly a programme with the help of, voice of Kashmir relayed in which PDA officials, lawmakers and LSO Network representatives were invited live on that particular event. A 30 minute debate was organized by a news caster of voice of Kashmir.

The series of the campaigns continued for one week in which the community leaders impressed upon all the stakeholders to the harmful consequences of the housing scheme. The result of this campaign was that PDA cancelled the housing scheme, banned allotting plots around Banjonsa Lake and allotted plots were cancelled too.

Prioritized activities for LSO Networks as proposed by member LSOs:

The activities that LSO Networks are carrying out are quite relevant given the development challenges of the people of the area. The reason is that the issues that they prioritized to focus upon were felt needs of their members or in response to emergency situations occurred in their neighbourhood or region, like flood. There is no other civil society organisation capable of handling such issues.



Picture 9 Meeting with members of LSO Fiza Foundation, a member of LSON Muzaffarabad

The study tried to understand the views of member LSOs about the activities of LSO Networks. They were asked what activities they would like their LSO Networks to focus upon. Table below shows the summarised result.

Table 18: Prioritized activities for LSONs proposed by member LSOs

Activities	No of LSOs	%age
Capacity building of member LSOs (Training, exposure visits)	5	56%
Resource mobilisation - for member LSOs as well for LSON	4	44%
Linkages development with government, donors and markets	3	33%
Awareness raising about development issues related to gender, environment, education and health	2	22%
Monitoring of member LSOs	2	22%
Income generation activities for member LSOs	2	22%
Policy Advocacy	2	22%
Poverty targeting	2	22%

Social sector infrastructure at Tehsil/Dist level	2	22%
Exposure visits for member LSOs to best practices	1	11%
Promote good governance in Govt. - improve allocation of resources, stop kick backs, compliance of rules and procedures at all level	1	11%
Tourism Development	1	11%
Promote Agriculture, Live Stock and Forestry	1	11%
Defend LSO/VOs against politicians, bureaucrats, Govt. Officers	1	11%

According to the table, the member LSOs consider their capacity building as the most critical activity followed by resource mobilization and linkages development. In fact linkages development is meant mainly for resource mobilisation; therefore, if these two activities are combined then resource mobilization tops the list.

Chapter 7: Financial viability of LSO Networks

Networking tends to be costly both in terms of time and money. However, the costs of networking are often treated as overheads. Therefore research studies¹¹ suggest that financing networking is often found to be problematic, because the practice of networking is more or less invisible and in most cases it is difficult to pinpoint its direct effects or to measure its value. Therefore, donors find it difficult to allocate funds for ‘invisible’ non-project purposes. This is particularly sensitive if lobbying and policy negotiations are prime objectives on the network’s agenda. Hence, networking NGOs often prefer to rely as much as possible on their own resources.

The most common issue of the study LSOs is financing. The prospects of getting funds from external donors for their core networking activities are quite bleak. Following are some options for their financial viability.

1. Keep their structure lean and mean. Instead of setting up a formal registered body with offices, furniture and equipments, set up a working committee consisting of a selected number of activists from member LSOs who have capacity, time and commitment to carry out networking activities. Instead of establishing separate office, use existing office space and equipments of one of its member LSOs and reimburse the actual expenses to the LSO. Alternatively, member LSOs could host the LSO Networks in their office in turn free of cost.
2. If formal structure seemed inevitable, then the member LSOs must be asked to pay annual fee to the Network to compensate its overhead cost.
3. In either cases, member LSOs must contribute in implementation of networking projects, like lobbying campaigns, fund raising meetings, proposal development cost etc.
4. The Networks should prepare their annual plans carefully and avoid stretching beyond their means.
5. The Network should operate in a decentralized mode. The existing organisational structure is centralized. They should think of revising it into a decentralized structure. They should always be ready to transfer as many activities to member LSOs as possible. Moreover, they should encourage direct interface between member LSOs so that maximum networking activities and information flows are conducted by the member LSOs themselves.

¹¹ UNDP, (May 2000) [A Practical Guide to NGO Networking](#)

Chapter 8: Feedback of RSP staff

According to a famous Arabic saying, people hate things they don't know. Therefore, people always take time in accepting new ideas. As a new idea, LSO networking also faces the same dilemma today. Therefore, it is important to take the opinions of those who have implemented LSO Networks and share their views with others because these are the ones who know what networking is all about. A separate questionnaire was, therefore, designed to capture and report the views of those RSP staff that are directly facilitating LSO Networking. Below are the feedbacks recorded from 16 staff members interviewed for the study:

Agreement or disagreement with the LSO Networking: All 16 people said that they fully agree with the networking idea. The main reason given by them for their agreement is the fact that LSO Networking empowers the community and help raise their voices at higher levels. Second, LSO Networking has improved both the quantity and quality of social mobilization. The household coverage in the LSO Network areas has substantially increased while the management capacity and transparency and accountability of member LSOs has also improved significantly. These, in fact, are the actual impact of the networking in their rather infancy stages of life cycle.

Box 2: Views of RSP staff about LSO Networks

A senior staff member who is engaged in networking of LSOs for the last two years, summed up his opinion by saying that the LSO Network is a unique and unprecedented organisational set up, because it has managed to pull resources from urban centres to the peripheries, i.e. to its member communities based in remote rural villages. In addition to resources, these networks have managed to capture the attention of individuals and organisations that have a key role to play in public policy.

Another staff was of the view that RSPs should provide full technical and financial support to LSO Networks because they are now in a position to take a significant workload from RSPs.

A third view was to nurture LSO Networks as Partner Organisations (PO) of RSPs.

Role of RSPs in establishing Networks: "LSO Networking is a natural demand for creating apex institutions at higher levels. Therefore, RSPs only have to introduce the concept, give guidance about how to go about it and provide necessary capacity building support on need basis" remarked one senior staff member. The bulk of responsibilities are readily taken up by the community leaders. After formation of the Network, however, RSPs need continuous monitoring as well as social guidance and capacity building in new areas and in those sectors where their existing level of expertise need updating and up-gradation.

Major strengths and weaknesses of LSO Networks: Volunteerism, motivation, commitment/ conviction, ownership of organisation, a good mix of different professionals, proper representation of poor and women in the leadership positions are the main strengths as reported by the staff. On the other hand, low

level of capacity and maturity, lack of proper financial resources, poor communication and proposal writing skills are the main weaknesses of LSO Networks at this point in time.

Besides the above mentioned weaknesses, the staff mentioned some constraints facing the Networks, including high travel cost for meetings due to longer distances, mobility issues for women members and lack of proper recognition by government agencies.

Opportunities for LSO Networks: Establishment of coordination mechanisms and development linkages with Govt. line agencies and donors, facilitate improving local government budgets, monitoring of government specially the local government functions with the view of creating an environment of transparency and accountability at local level are some opportunities to take for the LSO Networks.

Lessons Learnt and Recommendations: The staff mentioned the following major lessons learnt and recommendations regarding further promotion of LSO Network programme:

1. LSO Networking is very useful and positive idea. Over the last two years, it has shown considerable impact on creating visibility about the utility of COs/VOs/LSOs in society at large, gaining recognition as a trusted common platform at Tehsil/District level in order to interact and influence local government and other government line agencies, enhancing the scale and quality of social mobilisation, mobilising development resources from alternative sources, improving governance and management in member LSOs, promoting the culture of transparency, accountability and good governance at Tehsil/District level and developing their own action agendas and moving beyond the RSPs' range of activities.
2. LSO Networks need to be fully owned by the higher management of RSPs. The LSO Network has to be formally adopted as the next ascent of social mobilisation by the Boards and Management of RSPs and resources including dedicated staff should be allocated to promote networking across LSOs. The RSPs should also farm out certain activities to the Networks out of their work plans with budget.
3. Networking is a new field for most of the RSP staff. There are no sessions on networking in the existing social mobilisation and other training modules of RSPs. Therefore, the relevant staff, including the District Manager, Social Organisers and Field Coordinators should be properly trained in LSO Networking beforehand.
4. RSPs should develop monitoring formats and train the social organisers and filed monitoring staff in monitoring of LSO Networks.

5. Instead of forming a formal structure of LSO Network immediately, the LSO leaders should be allowed to form a working committee for networking initially. They should be given proper time so that they gradually create synergies, mutual understanding and confidence and establish norms for working relationships over time. They should also be made explore reliable alternative sources of funding to cover the overhead costs as well as the costs of core programme functions of the Network before getting into a formal shape.
6. Giving membership to newly formed LSOs immediately after their formation was not without negative consequences both for the member LSO and the LSO Network. There should be a buffer time for membership till they qualify for it by fulfilling some maturity criteria approved by the LSO Network. In fact the same criteria should be applicable to all LSOs.
7. A number of key LSON leaders are political figures and hence quite influential. These people are quite effective in winning recognition and support of political figures for the LSOs/LSO Networks and accessing resources from government agencies. They also effectively defend these community organisations from the hostile attitudes, remarks and actions of negative minded government and political people. However, there is the risk of hijacking of LSO Network by them. Therefore, RSPs need to keep a more vigilant eye on such LSO Networks.
8. Some LSO leaders are extremely busy social and political activists. At the time of their election, the relevant LSO members had chosen them mainly looking at their capability, experience and performance in their LSOs. However, despite their commitment to the cause of the LSO Network they cannot spare enough time to pursue its objectives. Therefore, this issue should be raised in the Network meetings and such persons should be given options between giving proper time and attention to LSO Network activities and resignation.

Chapter 9: Feedback of Other Stakeholders of LSO Networks

A key purpose of creating Networks of LSOs at District and Tehsil levels is to forge institutionalized linkages between the organised communities and the major development agencies in government sector. This describes the urgency and importance of understanding their views about the newly developed LSO Networks. Therefore, a separate questionnaire was developed to capture their opinions about LSO Networks. A total of 10 senior government officials were interviewed for the purpose.



Picture 10 The author meeting with TMO Dargai, Malakand, KPK

Below are their feedbacks in a summarized form:

General opinion about LSO Network: Out of the 10 government officials, 7 had a fair idea about the LSO Network, while 3 had not even heard of it before the researchers meeting with them. The researcher therefore, first explained the purpose, structure, outreach and major strengths of the Network to the government officials and then asked about their views about it. Their response was invariably very positive about the Network. They said that their departments would like to establish working relationship with each and every member LSOs of the Networks as well, because each one of them had UC level staff. DG Livestock and Conservator Forest AJK and TMO Dargai expressed their interest to hold briefing meetings with their concerned LSO Networks. The DG Livestock even offered to send one of his officers

to attend the Network meetings if it was possible. He was told that it was possible and he asked to inform him about the date, time and venue of next meeting.



Picture 11 The author meeting with Conservator Forest (left) and DG Livestock (right), AJK.

Possibilities of joint activities: The government officials were quite excited by learning how LSO Network and its member LSOs can solve their outreach problem so easily. Therefore, they readily accepted the offer of joint ventures at field level activities. They said that after developing proper partnership modes, they would ask their UC level technicians to closely work with the LSO activists.

Recommendation: RSPs should arrange briefing meetings of LSO Networks with all government departments and facilitate establish working relationships and partnership between the LSO Networks and their member LSOs. Unfortunately, to most government functionaries, NGOs are viewed as their rivals, always competing with them for resources and bringing defaming on them by showing off micro level achievements without any meaningful impacts on the community at large. Therefore, LSO Networks should take initiatives themselves and brief the government agencies about their vision, mission and objectives, their major strengths and offer cooperation and coordination to them in areas of mutual interest.

Chapter 10: Conclusion and Recommendations

RSPN along with its three member RSPs, (AKRSP, NRSP and AJKRSP) has been piloting LSO Networks in different areas over the last 2 years. By the end of September 2011, 14 LSO Networks, including 3 district level and 11 Tehsil level Networks have been formed. The overall results of these Networks are highly positive. They have proved themselves as relevant and viable model of organisations for furthering the cause of social mobilisation, which is the core poverty alleviation strategy of RSPs.

Over the last two years, the Networks have demonstrated considerable impact on creating visibility about the utility of COs/VOs/LSOs in the broader society, gaining recognition as a trusted common platform at Tehsil/District level in order to interact and influence local government and other government line agencies. They have shown their ability to establish linkages with development agencies in government, donors and mobilise development resources from alternative sources. They can not only improve governance and management in member LSOs, but also can promote the culture of transparency, accountability and good governance at Tehsil/District level. Last but not least, they are developing their own action agendas and moving beyond the RSPs' range of activities.

The study did not find any critical flaws in the organisational structure, governance mechanisms, management systems and the relevancy of objectives, strategies and action plans of the study LSO Networks. However, the study pointed out room for improvements in a number of areas. These have been listed below.

- 1. Proper ownership by RSPs:** LSO Networks should be fully owned and formally adopted as the next ascent of social mobilisation by the Boards and Management of RSPs. In addition to that, RSPs should allocate resources, both financial and human, to promote LSO Networks in those Tehsils/Districts where LSOs had been formed in majority of UCs.
- 2. Visioning exercise:** The LSO Networks need a proper visioning exercise to chalk out their strategies and future plans. RSPs need to facilitate the visioning exercise.
- 3. Increased Representation of women:** Although they have nominated a considerable number of women in the General Body and Executive Committee, there is no clear provision in the bylaws about the ratio of women's membership in the organisational bodies of the LSO Networks. It is recommended to add a special clause on women's membership ratio at each organisational body of LSO Networks.
- 4. Gender equality:** To further improve gender equality in the LSO Networks,
 1. Gender training is needed for both women and men along with proper follow up to ensure changes in attitudes.
 2. Women members need training on self-confidence building.
 3. Affirmative actions are needed to ensure women's

participation, like providing transport and holding meetings at places where women can come easily.

- 5. Women bank signatory:** Financial disbursement and withdrawal authority is a key element of empowerment. Therefore, all LSONs must nominate women signatories for their bank accounts.

- 6. Capacity building of LSO Network leaders:** Capacity building is an urgent and serious issue for both the LSO Networks and their member LSOs. It should be the responsibility of the relevant RSPs to undertake capacity need assessment exercises to systematically identify their capacity building needs and then plan and implement capacity building programmes for them with their full engagement.

- 7. Capacity building of RSP staff:** Networking is a new field for most of the RSP staff. There are no sessions on networking in the existing social mobilisation and other training modules of RSPs. Therefore, the relevant staff, including the District Manager, Social Organisers and Field Coordinators should be properly trained in LSO Networking beforehand.

- 8. Monitoring:** Due to lack of proper orientation and formats, RSP staff cannot carry out proper monitoring and supervision of the LSO Networks. RSPs should develop monitoring formats and train the social organisers and field monitoring staff in monitoring of LSO Networks.

- 9. Follow a Process Approach:** Some LSO Networks formed rather quickly without properly following the organic, pragmatic and sociological approach. Instead of forming a formal structure of LSO Network immediately, the LSO leaders should be allowed to form a working committee for networking initially. They should be given proper time so that they gradually create synergies, mutual understanding and confidence and establish norms for working relationships over time. They should also be made explore reliable alternative sources of funding to cover the overhead costs as well as the costs of core programme functions of the Network before getting into a formal shape.

- 10. Avoid overlapping of leadership:** With the view of providing leadership opportunities to a maximum number of people, the LSO Networks may recommend their office holders to relinquish their posts from their LSOs/VOs. Exception should be allowed in special circumstances, like lack of properly skilled persons in the lower tiers. This would be a strategic move to control certain influential and political figures in LSONs as well as LSOs.

- 11. Change extra busy leaders:** Some LSO leaders are extremely busy social and political activists. At the time of their election, the relevant LSO members had chosen them mainly looking at their capability, experience and performance in their LSOs. However, despite their commitment to the cause of the LSO Network they cannot spare enough time to pursue its objectives. Therefore, this issue should be raised in the Network meetings and such persons should be given options between giving proper time and attention to LSO Network activities and resignation.
- 12. Strict criteria for membership:** Giving membership to newly formed LSOs immediately after their formation was not without negative consequences both for the member LSO and the LSO Network. There should be a buffer time for membership till they qualify for it by fulfilling some maturity criteria approved by the LSO Network. In fact the same criteria should be applicable to all LSOs.
- 13. Vigilant eye on influential leaders:** A number of key leaders are influential and political figures. These people are quite effective in winning recognition and support of political figures for the LSOs/LSO Networks and accessing resources from government agencies. They also effectively defend these community organisations from the hostile attitudes, remarks and actions of negative minded government and political people. However, there is the risk of hijacking of LSO Network by them. Therefore, RSPs need to keep a more vigilant eye on such people.
- 14. Circulation of minutes of minutes:** Minutes of meetings are not shared in writing with stakeholders. It is recommended that the minutes of meetings are circulated in writing among member LSOs and other relevant stakeholders regularly.
- 15. Adopt cheaper means of communication:** The LSO Networks should consider the below mentioned cheaper forms of communications to remain engaged with its members, stakeholders and the general masses. 1) Text messaging urgent information, 2) emailing minutes of meetings and other important decisions or information 3) publication of newsletters 4) publication of key decisions and information in local print media 5) putting up information outside the LSON offices on a public notice board.
- 16. Financial record keeping and audit:** Financial record keeping is the key determinant of transparency and accountability. Therefore, LSO Networks should take it seriously and maintain an official receipt book, a cash book and a ledger to record its financial transactions systematically according to accounting standards and rules. Moreover, audit is a legal requirement for all registered firms and a crucial means of ensuring transparency and accountability and winning the confidence of members and public at large.

Till the time that the LSOs and LSONs become financially able to get their accounts audited from recognised auditing firms, the RSPs should audit their accounts regularly. On the other hand, the LSO Network is going to be the leading civil society organisation to promote the cause of transparency and accountability across government organisations, NGOs and even in private sector organisations at Tehsil/District level. Therefore, they should first put their own house in order.

17.Support in establishing working relationships with government departments: RSPs should arrange briefing meetings of LSO Networks with all government departments and facilitate establish working relationships and partnership between the LSO Networks and their member LSOs.

Annexes

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Annex 1

Profiles of LSO Networks by 30-09-011

S. No	Name of LSO Network	RSP	Type	DOF	District/Tehsil	Member LSOs
1	LSO Network Ghizer	AKRSP	Dist	Aug-09	Ghizer	10
2	Chitral Community Development Network	AKRSP	Dist	Aug-09	Chitral	14
3	District Network Rawalakot	NRSP	Dist	25-07-011	Poonch	19
4	Tehsil Support Org. Fatehpur Thakiala	NRSP	Tehsil	18-08-09	Fatehpur Thakiala	8
5	Broad Vision Network Kotli Sattian	NRSP	Tehsil	10-08-08	Kotli Sattian	10
6	Sami Ranizai Dev. Foundation Dargai, Malakand	NRSP	Tehsil	27-03-010	Dargai	12
7	LSO Network Karawan, Turbat	NRSP	Tehsil	25-04-010	Turbat	13
8	Tehsil Support Organization Hatian	AJKRSP	Tehsil	15-03-010	HatianBala	8
9	Tehsil Support Organization Patika	AJKRSP	Tehsil	15-03-010	Patika	7
10	Tehsil Support Organization Muzaffarabad	AJKRSP	Tehsil	22-09-010	Muzaffarabad	16
11	Tehsil Support Organization Leepa	AJKRSP	Tehsil	22-09-010	Leepa	2
12	Mardan Rural Development Network	NRSP	Tehsil	27-09-010	Mardan	9
13	LSO Network Rajor, Swabi	NRSP	Tehsil	27-03-010	Rajor (Swabi)	14
14	LSO Network Gojal	AKRSP	Tehsil	25-01-010	Gojal	4
	Total					146

Annex 2

Profiles of Study LSO Networks

1	Name of District	Rawalakot	Malakand	Muzaffarabad	Total
2	Name of Tehsil	NA	Dargai	Muzaffarabad	
3	Registered (Yes/No)	y	In process	y	
4	Date of formation	25-Jul-11	27-Mar-10	22-Feb-10	
5	HHs organized in member COs				
6	Total HHs in LSON area	61309	24058	48707	134074
7	Organized HHs in LSON area	32392	15750	31453	79595
8	%age organized	53%	65%	65%	59%
9	Total organized members	33944	15750	26818	76512
10	Organized men members	12634	10533	14036	37203
11	%age	37%	67%	52%	49%
12	Organized women members	21310	5196	12782	39288
13	%age	63%	33%	48%	51%
14	Total COs in LSON area	1569	1050	1166	3785
15	Men COs	518	756	497	1771
16	%age	33%	72%	43%	47%
17	Women COs	720	294	384	1398
18	%age	46%	28%	33%	37%
19	Mixed COs	331	0	285	616
20	%age	21%	0%	24%	46%
21	Total LSOs in the area	26	12	19	57
22	No of member LSOs	26	12	19	57
23	%age of member LSOs	100%	100%	100%	100%
24	Total GB members	52	60	38	150
25	Women GB members	20	24	19	63
26	%age of women GB members	38%	40%	50%	42%
27	Total EX.Com members	7	17	17	41
28	Women members	3	5	5	13
29	%age of women members	43%	29%	29%	32%

Annex 3

A: Questionnaire for LSON

Place of meeting _____ Date _____ No of Pax _____

Profile of the LSON Network			
Name of RSP	Region	District	Tehsil
Name of LSON	Formation date	Total HHs in LSON Area	Organized HHs
Total member COs	Men	Women	Mixed
Total member VOs	Men	Women	Mixed
Total Member LSOs	Men	Women	Mixed

1. What are the major goals and objectives of the LSON?

a: _____ b: _____
 _____ c: _____
 _____ d: _____
 _____ e: _____

2. Household coverage in the District/Tehsil into COs and are member of LSO:

Total HHs in the Area	Organized HHs	%age of organized HHs

Organized members in the area

Men members	%age of men members	Women members	%age of women members	Total members

No of COs in the area

	Men COs	Women COs	Mixed COs	Total COs
No				
%age				

3. Has the LSON other Civil Society Organizations as its members?

4. What is the Organogram of LSON?

5. The General Body composition of LSON

Total LSOs in the area	# Member LSOs	%age of Member LSOs

6. Women's representation in the LSON General Body

Total Members	Men	Women	%age of Women Members

7. How active women members are in the LSON?

The Ex. Committee composition:

8. Women's representation in the LSON Executive Committee

Total members	Men	Women	%age of Women

9. How active women members are in the LSON Ex. Committee?

10. Poverty status of the members of the Ex. Committee

Total Members	Poorest	Poor	Non Poor

%age			
------	--	--	--

11. Has the LSON a bank account on its name? If yes who operate it?

12. Do the members of the Ex. Committee work as volunteers?

13. Which of the following expertise exist within the LSON?

	# Trained persons	V. Good	Adequate	Inadequate	None
a) Communication – collection, analysis and dissemination of development information among member organizations, stakeholders, media and across the wider civil society					
b) Lobbying/ influencing others – political parties, political leaders, media, religious groups, NGO sector, corporate sector, local government etc.					
c) Consensus building – identifying and analysing opportunities and issues and articulating shared visions and solutions					
d) Alliance and partnership building – enhancing interactions between various actors – civil society, media, donors, government etc					
e) Capacity building of member and partner organizations, beneficiary groups in various fields					
f) Membership management – keeping the member organizations active, making them accountable, contributing in their activities without controlling them					
g) Mobilize alternative resources – both from internal and external sources					
h) Promote linkages – bringing together like minded individuals, groups and institutions around shared development agendas					

14. What activities LSON has carried out in each one of the above areas?

a: _____ b: _____
 _____ c: _____
 _____ d: _____
 _____ e: _____

15. What are the three priority areas for capacity building of LSON leaders? Why? How? Who?

a: _____ b: _____
 _____ c: _____

16. Has the LSON established its own office?

17. Has the LSON written byelaws approved by its General Body?

18. How often do the General Body and Executive Committee of the LSON meet?

19. Has the LSON developed its Annual Plan and Budget?

20. Has the LSON helped member LSONs in resources mobilization from internal sources?

21. Does the LSON raise funds through internal and external sources for achievement of its objectives

From Internal Sources

Membership fee	Service Charge	Cash Donation	Donation in kind	Others	Total

From external sources:

Name of Donor	Cash Donation	Donation in kind	Total
Total			

Total LSON Funds Rs

22. Has the LSON developed linkages with donors and raised funds for member LSOs?

Funds developed by the LSON

Donor	Project	Quantity	Cost	# Benef. HHs	Implementing LSO/LSOs
Total					

23. Has the LSON contacts with MPA/MLC, Tehsil and District Govt. and LG&RD, shares information and resources with them and engage them in its development programmes

Name of Organization	Activity	No	Cost	# Benef.

24. Does the LSON network and share resources and information with other civil society, Govt and Corporate Sector organizations to pursue objectives of common interest

Organization	Activity	Purpose

25. Does the LSON monitor the activities of its member LSOs

26. Does the LSON support member LSOs in their capacity building

Activity	Indicator	Number

27. What are the major successes and achievements of the LSON?

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----
6. -----

<p>28. What are the strengths of the LSON?</p> <p>1. -----</p> <p>2. -----</p> <p>3. -----</p> <p>4. -----</p> <p>5. -----</p>
<p>29. What are the weaknesses of the LSON?</p> <p>1. -----</p> <p>2. -----</p> <p>3. -----</p> <p>4. -----</p> <p>5. -----</p>

Annex 4

B: Questionnaire for LSON Office Bearers

1	Name	
2	Father's name	
3	Sex	
4	Age	
5	Occupation	
6	Education	
7	Experience & Skills in development sector	1: _____ 2: _____ 3: _____ 4: _____ 5: _____ 6: _____ 7: _____ 8: _____
8	Designation in LSON; since when?	
9	Name of LSO	
10	Position in LSO; since when?	
11	Position in VO; since when?	
12	Position in CO; since when?	
13	Position in other Community Based Organizations: Organization name; Position; since when?	CBO 1: _____ CBO 2: _____ CBO 3: _____ CBO 4: _____
14	Why you have been elected for the position	1: _____ 2: _____ 3: _____
15	What are your contributions to LOSN	1: _____ 2: _____ 3: _____
16	Do you need capacity building support? What, why, from whom?	

Annex 5

C: Questionnaire for RSP staff

Name: _____ Designation _____
Region: _____ Date _____

- 1. What is your personal opinion about the LSON idea? Do you agree or disagree?

- 2. If you disagree why?

- 3. Do you have any alternative institutional model in mind? What is it?

To those who agree with the LSON idea:

- 4. Why is your RSP promoting LSON?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
- 5. What contributions RSP has made in LSON?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
- 6. What are the strengths of LSON?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____
- 7. What are the weaknesses of LSON?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____
- 8. What opportunities does LSON have?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____
- 9. What things went wrong? How and why?

- 10. What are the major achievements of LSON? How and why?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____
- 11. Suggestions for improvement of LSON programme?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____
- 12. Suggestions for capacity building of LSON Leaders?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____

Annex 6

D: Questionnaire for member LSOs

Name: _____ UC _____
Region: _____ Date _____ No of meeting Pax _____

1. Who are your representatives in LSON? (name, designation in LSON)
1: Name: _____ Designation: _____
2: Name: _____ Designation: _____
3: Name: _____ Designation: _____
4: Name: _____ Designation: _____

2. When and why you joined LSON?
Date of joining: _____
Reasons by joining: _____

3. What are your contributions in LSON?
1: _____ Rs _____
2: _____ Rs _____
3: _____ Rs _____
4: _____ Rs _____
5: _____ Rs _____

4. What benefits you have received/expect to receive from LSON?
1: _____ Rs _____
2: _____ Rs _____
3: _____ Rs _____
4: _____ Rs _____

5. How and when LSON communicate with your LSO?

6. What are the matters LSON communicated with your LSO in the last 6 months?

7. How do you communicate your ideas, concerns and suggestions with LSON? Who does the communication?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____

8. What ideas, concerns and suggestions you communicated with LSON in the last 6 months?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____

9. What was the LSON respond to your suggestions/concerns? Are you satisfied with LSON response?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____

10. Have you carried out any joint activity with LSON? If yes, why you decided for joint action? How it went?
1: _____ Rs _____
2: _____ Rs _____
3: _____ Rs _____
4: _____ Rs _____
5: _____ Rs _____

11. Do you plan to take some more joint activities with LSON in future? On what issues?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____

12. What development activities would you like the LSON to focus upon?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____

Annex 7

E: Questionnaire for other stakeholders of LSON

Name: _____ Designation _____
Organization: _____ Date _____ No of meeting Pax _____

1. What is your general opinion about the LSON?

2. What are the main things the LSON is trying to achieve? Why these are important to you/your organisation?

3. What development activities would you like the LSON to focus upon?
1: _____
2: _____
3: _____
4: _____
5: _____

4. Have you carried out any joint activity with LSON? If yes, why you decided for joint action? How it went?

5. Will you do more joint activities with LSON in future? On what issues?

6. Are the LSON leaders trustworthy? What is the perception of general public about them?

Annex8

List of study member LSOs

S. No	LSO Network	Name of LSO
1	Rawalakot	Pearl Rural Support Organization
2		Dhamni Rural Support Org
3		Banjonsa Rural Dev Org
4	Dargai	KotMaina
5		Shaheen
6		Hero Shah
7	Muzaffarabad	Area Development Org Kaimanja
8		Fizza Foundation/ Langarpura
9		KoomiKot

Annex 9

List of office bearers of LSO Networks Interviewed

S. No	LSON	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Education
1	Rawalakot	Mumutaz Hussain	Male	33	Social Work	BA
2	Rawalakot	Salma Tariq	Female	31	Social Work	Matriculate
3	Rawalakot	Nuzhat Parveen	Female	28	Teaching	BA
4	Rawalkot	Malik M. Azizi Khan	Male	37	Social Work	FA
5	Rawalkot	M. Shafaat Faizi	Male	35	Social Work	MA
6	Rawalkot	Kausar Parveen	Female	31	Social Work	BA
7	Dargai	Fayaz Gul	Male	42	Social Work	MA-M Ed
8	Dargai	Umer Sadiq	Male	35	Social Work	BA
9	Dargai	Mukhtar Ahmed	Male	55	Social Work	BA
10	Dargai	Altaf	Male	30	Farmer	Matriculate
11	Dargai	Jamroz Khan	Male	45	Farmer	Double MA
12	Muzaffarababd	Sh. Mushtaq Ahmed	Male	30	Advocate	MA LLB
13	Muzaffarababd	Raja Afaq Ahmed Khan	Male	47	Social Work	BA
14	Muzaffarababd	Nadeem Azad	Male	34	Social Work	Matriculation
15	Muzaffarababd	M. Ejaz Younus	Male	45	Social Work	BA

Annex 10

List of RSP Staff Interviewed

S. No	RSP Area	Name of Staff	Designation
1	NRSP Rawalakot	M. Habib	SO/LSO Focal Person
2		Naseer Ahmed	SO
3		HaroonInayat	PO MER
4		Shabbir Ahmed Khan	DPO
5		ShabanaNaqi	CRO
6		Ejaz Nazir	SCO
7		Salma Anwar	CRW
8		Shamraiz Khan	CRW
9		WaheedIshaq	D. Eng
10		Muhammad Waseem	DAO
11	NRSP Mardan	Istikhar Ahmed	RPC
12		S. Mir Ali Shah	LSO Focal Person
13		Ijaz Ali Shah	SO
14	AJKRSP	Salma Awan	PO Soc Mob
15		FarzanaRiaz	PO HRD
16		Ali Qamar	DM

Annex 11**List of Other Stakeholders Interviewed**

S. No	Name	Designation
1	Sardar M. Rafiq Khan	DFO, Poonch, AJK
2	Dr.TahirMehmood	Vet. Officer, Poonch, AJK
3	Mr.Zareen Khan	Asst. Director Agri. Poonch, AJK
4	DR. NaseemHasratQazi	Asst. DHO, Poonch, AJK
5	Ms Shaheen Rashid	Superintendent Social Welfare, Poonch, AJK
6	Muhammad Sami Ullah	Tehsil Municipal Officer, Dargai, Malakand
7	Abdul Rauf Querishi	Conservator Forest, AJK
8	ShakirNisar	Director Agri. AJK
9	Dr. S. Riaz Hussain Shah	DG Livestock, AJK
10	Khursheed Ahmed	Intemologist, Agr. Dept. AJK