



Programme Introduction

In 2008, Mr Shoab Sultan Khan, Chairman Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), and Dr. Rashid Bajwa, Chief Executive Officer National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), conceptualised the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP), and undertook policy advocacy with the Government of Sindh (GoS). In 2009, the Chief Minister of Sindh considerably agreed to support the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) to implement UCBPRP in Jacobabad district. Under UCBPRP, SRSO mobilised rural women to foster their own Community Institutions. Rural women formed Community Organisations (COs) at mohalla level, then federated COs into village level Village Organisations (VOs), and finally the VOs were federated at the Union Council level into Local Support Organisations (LSOs) in rural areas of the district. Organised women then began to take initiatives to improve their families' livelihoods and lives, some through self-help measures and some with SRSO's support.

This is a case study of one such community member that clearly demonstrates the positive economic and social change that has been brought about by GoS's UCBPRP leading to reduction in poverty and generating hope for a better future.

Case Study 3 of 15: Ms. Kazbano

By Savaila Hunzai

Ms. Kazbano, a 32 years old peasant woman, hails from village Budho Samejo of district Jacobabad. Her parents were also peasants. Kazbano is one of the 10 children, seven boys and three girls. The family lived in a mud-cum-straw hut. She said that apart from farming on a landlord's land, her mother made Rillis (wall/floor covers) to sell in the village. She learned making Rillis from her mother and helped her mother in household chores. Belonging to a conservative village, she never visited any hospital in case of sickness. There was no school in the village, and schooling for girls was even beyond villager's imagination. Drinking water was available in the vicinity, tells Kazbano.



Kazbano was only 15 when she was married off to a man in her village. At the time of her marriage, her parents gifted her some silver bangles and golden nose pins and earrings in dowry. She said that she started her married life in a mud-room with her husband's family: parents-in-law and two brothers-in-law. One of her brother-in-law was married and had a

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daughter. The joint family did not own any land. They were sharecroppers on a landlord's land. Kazbano said that crop yield was not always sufficient to meet the needs of the family for the whole year as the landlord provided them with only 10-15 percent of total yield. Especially, in the years of bad weather, the yield was insufficient for the household's annual food consumption. In cases of untoward situations like food shortage, illness and decease, the landlord would lend them one quintal of rice or wheat, which was to be repaid by labour and shared yield at the time of new harvest. In lean season menfolk worked in brick-kiln and rice mills.

The family owned five goats that produced milk for household consumption; they usually asked neighbours, who had buffalo, for butter milk (Lassi) for daytime meals. Kazbano said, "We usually consumed boiled rice, lentils (daal), local vegetables (bataalu), chillies and flat bread (roti) those days. My daily activities involved household chores including cooking, collecting firewood and cow dung, and sometimes I went to fields to help elders in farming. I neither had time to socialise with females in neighbourhood nor did our men allow us to go out and talk to neighbours." Kazbano said that she gave birth to her son one year after her marriage. Later, with the gap of one and half year between every child, she had six children: four sons and two daughters. She said, "All children were born in the house without the help of any midwife. I did not know about pre-delivery medical check-ups that the local Community Health Workers suggest pregnant women nowadays. In sickness, we had to travel to Thul, a place 5 km away from our village. We were not allowed to go out without a male companion. Also, unlike today, the roads were not paved and our men travelled to Thul on bullock-carts."

The family kept extending and resources shrinking. They started to have disputes over common resources such as food, clothing and space. She still remembers arguments of her sister-in-law when they had insufficient food to feed all children. Observing consistent arguments, elders of the family decided to split the family. Her initial days at her in-laws' home were better than her life later with her husband, Kazbano stated. She was able to eat two meals everyday as all family members worked and earned satisfying meals. After separation from in-laws, she along with her husband and children started to live in a hut. Unlike before, now as her husband was a shared-cropper, the only bread winner of the family, he could hardly earn a single meal for his family. Rainwater trickled down in her hut in rainy seasons and she faced difficulties living in the mud. Kazbano said, "Every passing day, I faced stress, hunger and physical poverty."

"One early morning our village men informed us that floodwater has entered our village. A tractor took my family, our three goats and my in-laws to Tipul in Baluchistan. We lived at a relative's house for fifteen days and returned later to Thul. We sold our goats and jewellery to rent a house in Thul. After four months when flood was over, we returned to our village. We had lost our huts; they were completely flattened by the water. We faced a lot of problems in here; we didn't have drinking water as there were a lot of mosquitoes. We were provided food by different NGOs, but we only had dirty water to drink and our children suffered from sickness. We collected wood pieces and straws and made a shelter for our children," Kazbano said.

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“In this backdrop, SRSO among many other organisations provided us shelter and emergency aid. Later, they revisited the village and discussed that they wanted to support us rebuild our assets and improve our livelihoods if the local women agreed to get together to work in groups. As our men were already satisfied and happy with the support SRSO provided after the flood, they agreed to allow us to attend meetings with them,” Kazbano said.

Kazbano continued to say, “In 2012, SRSO team including two female members conducted meeting, where we learned about Community Organisations (CO). In the beginning we did not understand anything, however, the school master from our neighbourhood made it simple and said that we have to make a group and select our leaders. We formed a group called CO of 13 members. We selected Imam Zaadi as our president because she was trustworthy and intelligent. Also, her name was easy to remember, so we name our CO as Imam Zadi. With the frequent meetings with the Social Organiser of SRSO, we learned many things like introducing ourselves, saving, cleanliness. Now, I save money from Rilli making. Initially, we shied away, and put scarf on our face when they asked us to say our name, but with the passage of time we became accustomed to meeting formalities.”

“In one of the meetings, I and my fellow CO members learned about Community Investment Fund,” she recalls. Kazbano stated, “With the help of the local teacher we wrote a Manzoori, resolution for CIF. After a month SRSO team met us in one of our meetings and conducted a survey. We informed them that we wanted to make a fish pond collectively. Six of us agreed to make the fish pond using our CIF. Each of us received Rs. 15,000. Cumulatively Rs. 90,000 were then used to prepare the fish pond and we bought seed and food for the fish. We along with our men did all the labour work to install the tube well. It took whole year for the fish to grow. We sold the fish and returned the CIF loan. We didn't make any profit in the first year.” Carrying on with fish farming for two years, in 2015 Kazbano and her five fellow members again applied for and received CIF loan amounting to Rs. 90,000, Rs.15, 000 per person. This was again invested in the fish farming enterprise. After one year, they sold the fish, repaid the loan and gained a profit of Rs. 42,000. Each member received Rs. 7,000 as profit. Kazbano bought a goat with this amount and it has now produced two kids. Another CIF loan was taken in 2016, and Kazbano hopes for increased profit this year.

More recently, Kazbano has admitted her 3 children in the local primary school. She said that during very hard times, she sent her children to her mother for food and cuts back the number of meals they eat at home. Now as her husband works at a rice mill, and she makes Rillis to sell, they are able to spare some income for children's education. Not only did joining CO improve her economic well-being but it also has a positive impact on her social well-being. Kazbano concludes her story, “One important lesson that I have learnt is that despite all hardships one must never give up hope. Hope was concretised when we got together into CO. Now we are on the path to further improving our lives and Insha Allah our children will do much better.”

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