

DAFPAK CASE STUDY

AN EXEMPLARY ENTREPRENEUR



CRP BALQEES SHARES HOW HER SOCIAL VOLUNTEERISM HAS HELPED HER COMMUNITY AND HER BUSINESS THRIVE

The large mud walls on either side of the dusty, beaten path struggle to block out the sun's unforgiving rays. The path leads forth to tiny abodes nestled in the shade. The men, clad in loose white garments, defy the sweltering heat so their livestock can graze. Meanwhile, the women, spend their afternoons indoors cooking over brick stoves, and fussing over the children yearning for their attention. The village of Sardar Rahim Khan is a far cry from the hustle and bustle of the main city located a considerable distance away.

Through an unassuming front door of one of the houses, one is met by a large wooden khoka, propped up on bricks. Embroidery for sale, saturated with shades of yellow, pink and blue adorn the khoka's roofline and inner walls. A large sack of sugar, an assortment of spices and snacks, and common consumables like tea and cigarettes dominate

most of the space inside.

The khoka belongs to Balqeess Bano, an active and experienced CRP from Union Council Kot Karam Khan, who runs the khoka with the help of her husband. "Before I built this business, I was just a simple housewife. I was fortunate enough to attain an education up to the 10th standard after which I continued to brush up on my knowledge with the help of my husband, a teacher in a local school. I was selected as a CRP in the summer of 2016. The respective Rural Support Programme (RSP) provided me with a box filled with contraceptives and some consumables, informing me this was a starter pack intended to help me build a business for myself. I managed to take that box and turn it into the khoka you see here beside me," she shares proudly.

"With the box and my social marketing training, I would go

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door-to-door and make some sales. I was putting all my money back into getting more stock. At the same time, I was giving women counseling for family planning – a duty I perform to this day. Those meetings and long talks helped me become better friends with my neighbors. They began to buy things from me at their doorstep as opposed to journeying to the city for basic supplies. We started making some money. I was adamant about putting it back into the business, which is how I bought this khoka.”

Balqees then gestures to the embroidery draping her khoka and adds, “I began to make things for people as well. These handicrafts sell well. See here, this is a purse I made. It took me a week to make two, its twin sold for a handsome fee.”

“The local Village Health Committee approached me some time ago, when DAFPAK began, as they knew I had worked as a CRP before as well, back when I started my business. They asked me to work in a nearby village – a new area – which I accepted. This social work has been very rewarding. The women are very grateful to learn of their choices, and for the mediation I provide to bring the family collectively on board with their decisions. It has also been beneficial for my business, as it is dependent on word-of-mouth. When this project started, I was only earning Rs.3,000 a month from my khoka. Today, I am earning up to Rs.12,000 a month! Members of the community visit my little khoka for their everyday needs. I also stock condoms and birth pills, which help them reliably stay on a method and not accidentally get pregnant”, Balqees said, pointing towards the corner of her khoka where she kept them.

“It’s slowly becoming more socially acceptable to talk about birth spacing. My husband has always been there for me, and all 4 of my children were planned. Yet, I know that not every woman is that fortunate. Hopefully with time, we will bring societal change. We are already making an impact day-by-day,” Balqees concludes with a smile.