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## Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

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### Izgul's Journey from Poverty to Prosperity



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FOR THE BRACE'S GRANT COMPONENT



PROGRAMME TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNER



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## About BRACE Programme

The Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme is based on the social mobilisation approach to Community Driven Development (CDD) developed by the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in Pakistan. RSPs believe that each poor household has the potential to improve its condition, however the household faces constraints that do not allow them to realise their own potential. These constraints can only begin to be removed when the poor households organise themselves into a network of their own organisations at settlement level (Community Organisations –COs), Village level (Village Organisations-VOs) and at the Union Council level (Local Support Organisations –LSOs). Once organised, they prepare Micro Investment Plans (MIPs) wherein they highlight the potential income generating activities that they can undertake on their own, the constraints they face and how these constraints can be removed. RSPs provide Community Investment Fund (CIF) to these organisations so that they can provide small loans to CO members for the implementation of MIPs for income generation. While COs focus on income generating activities at household level and awareness about importance of maternal health, hygiene, education, sanitation, environment and savings etc, VO's focus more on broader issues that affect the whole village, e.g. education, health, infrastructure, etc. The focus of LSOs is to support and guide the COs/VOs, and to foster linkages with government line departments and other organisations working in the area.

In addition to providing guidance, supporting social mobilisation and provision of CIF, RSPs also support other interventions under the BRACE Programme: Income Generating Grants (IGG) to the poorest households identified through the poverty scorecard (PSC) census exercise, Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI), Technical, Vocational and Education Training (TVET), training of CO/VO/LSO leaders and Community Resource Persons (CRPs), and awareness raising sessions at community level. RSPs also facilitate linkages with government line departments to improve local basic service delivery.

The BRACE Programme is being implemented in nine districts of Balochistan with the objective to mobilise 1.9 million men and women from all rural areas of the respective districts into 19,129 COs, 3,103 VO's and 249 LSOs. The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) are the implementing partners for the BRACE Programme. The Programme is supported by the European Union Delegation to Pakistan. Further information about BRACE is available at: <http://www.rspn.org/index.php/current-projects/eu-rspn-balochistan-rural-development-and-community-empowerment-programme-brace/>

## Purpose, Scope and Methodology of the Study

The primary objective of this case study is to understand the past and present socio-economic status of the household and to track transformational change in Izgul's household with the roll out of NRSP's interventions, under the BRACE Programme.

There are various programme interventions like Community Investment Fund (CIF), Income Generating Grants (IGG), Technical Educational and Vocational Skills Training (TEVT) and Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) that will be offered in the area. Further update of this study will help to track and explain transformational changes.

To collect this story, we purposely selected the beneficiary who was willing to share her story. The data was collected through the qualitative technique of in-depth interviews and participant observation. Also, quantitative data has been used that was collected through poverty scorecard survey (NRSP, 2017). An open-ended approach was adopted during the research interactions so as to allow a wide range of ideas. The data includes the household's human capital, financial capital, natural capital, and social capital. An in-depth interview was conducted from Ms. Izgul with her verbal consent in her hamlet, Dannasyar.

## Village Profile

Village Dannasyar is located in Shahrak Union Council of District Kech in Balochistan. It consists of 128 households with a total population of 657. The Poverty Score Card (PSC) Survey was conducted in 2017 (NRSP-PSC Survey 2017). The Table 1 shows that on the poverty band 24% households of village Dannasyar fall into the poor (0-23), including 3% in the category of extremely poor (0-11 PSC category). The corresponding figures for the Union Council Shahrak 22.16% and 4.03%, and for the district Kech are 41% and 7%. This shows that the proportion of poor households (0-23 PSC category) in village Dannasyar is less than the average of the Union Council and the district (NRSP-PSC Survey 2017).

Distribution of Households by PSC in Village:

<b>PSC</b>	<b>No. of HHs</b>	<b>Percentage of HHs</b>
0-11	4	3.13
12-18	15	11.72
19-23	11	8.59
24-34	53	41.41
35-50	30	23.44
61-100	15	11.72
Total	128	

## Izgul's Journey from Poverty to Prosperity

Izgul is 38 years old and her household PSC score is 18. She was born in village Dannasyar, grew up and got married in the same village at the age of 17. She did not receive any formal education and did not learn any productive skill.

Izgul began her story of her life struggles with what she did before getting help from EU funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme in the form of CIF amounting to PKR 50,000 (USD 330). To make ends meet, her husband worked as a daily wage labourer. She said that her family does not possess any land or livestock. Until recently, her family lived an under-subsistent life relying only on seasonal labourer work: on others' agricultural lands and collecting fuelwood for sale.

Izgul explained, *"My husband worked for landowners during cultivation season and in return we would receive a small portion of yield (usually wheat, rice and dates) that was not sufficient for household's annual consumption"*. She estimates that the family received about 250 kg of wheat, 100 kg dates and 60 kg of rice every year from farm labouring. They stored grains for their family's consumption. In the years of bad weather, they would not receive any yield, and the family has seen the days when they had nothing to eat.





Izgul remembers that there were times when her family suffered from hunger but there was not any bout of arguments, shouting and fights. *“We could see him[her husband] struggling to earn some money to feed us,”* she lamented. At the time of grave situations when the family would run out of food and money, her brother would help her a little bit.

Currently, Izgul lives with her four children (two sons aged 10 and 7 and two daughters aged 15 years and 3) in a single room mud house without a toilet facility. *“My house is made up of straws and twigs and I have recently put mud around the walls. The ceiling is made of only straw,”* Iz said showing her house. The whole family goes to the open fields for defecation. Her household uses a hand pump belonging to one of her neighbours for drinking water and electricity power supply line in the household is also provided by another neighbour.

Iz said that after birth of her children, all responsibilities regarding their basic needs increased. She joined her husband in collecting firewood from the farthest areas and prepared it for sale on the local wood stalls. From this, the family would hardly earn PKR. 100-150 (USD 1) in a day. There are few livelihood opportunities in this part of rural Balochistan. With this small amount, the family could hardly one meal a day.

Iz cooked one or two times a day - morning and evening – depending on availability of resources. The diet was very simple. Mostly boiled rice or simple *roti* [flat bread] were eaten with season's cheap vegetables usually potatoes, or lentils. When vegetables were not available, they relied only on boiled rice. She would make tea; with milk or water only. For fuel, Izgul used twigs and straws that she would collect from nearby bushes.

Iz reminisces that she would not have any disposable income to spend on her children. She narrated, *"I sent my children to the nearby government school, but they returned home crying, 'the master has asked us to wear shoes and uniform. Without shoes, no one is allowed to sit in the class. I felt helpless. I had nothing to buy them shoes with. We lived in extreme poverty."* Life was stressful for Izgul and her family. She said that she often fell sick and her blood pressure shots up due to stress caused by family needs and poverty.

Iz said that she does not possess any productive skills unlike many other women in her hamlet. Many women in her village, embroidered Balochi dresses; they took orders from fellow villagers and contributed to their family income. The village is not linked to any market to sell these products so women embroidered only when they received orders from the villagers.

Izgul said that her family does not have easy access to health care due to inadequate income. The Basic Health Unit in the village does not have any staff to attend patients. *"Going to a hospital outside village costs us a lot. We would take loans from relatives in severe situations"*, she said. Iz continued, *"Last year, when I was badly sick, my blood pressure shot up. I had lost my hope. We did not have any money to pay a doctor's fee- not even enough money to meet the travel fare to a hospital. Luckily, women from my Community Organisation (CO) collected PKR. 5,000 (USD 50) for my treatment. Sultana [the CO President] accompanied me to the hospital and helped my family in the time of crises. I am doing better now."*

**Ms. Izgul Joins BRACE Programme as CO Member:**

Social mobilisation process was initiated in settlement Dannasyar, union council Shahrak, district Kech by the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) on 17 October, 2018. Social Organisers visited the village and conducted programme introduction with the community and with their consent on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 CO Dannasyour-5 was formed by NRSP. The members elected Gul Jan as CO President and Sultana as CO Manager. Izgul joined CO as a member with a hope that this will help her family fight her household level poverty.

Izgul said, *"I joined the gathering when Sultana came to my house to call me. All were my neighbours only three (two men and a women) were outsiders. I don't remember what they said because it was new experience for her"*. She said that because everyone else agreed it will be beneficial for them in the future, she decided to become a member of the CO.

According to NRSP's Poverty Scorecard (PSC) Survey 2017, IZGUL's family PSC score is 18, and as noticed during the visit to her home, she hardly owned any of the basic life amenities. She lives a life without the facility of refrigerator, cell phone, television and vehicle. She cooks food in mud stove using sticks and twigs which she collects from bushes.

After joining the CO, IZGUL became aware of the importance of sanitation, children's health and how to keep her home clean. She said that she was already aware of the importance of children's education, but she did not have any resources and the family could not afford their education. In a CO meeting, when she was asked what she would do to improve her standard of life, she mentioned her desire of establishing a small-scale enterprise (a shop). She applied for a loan from Community Investment Fund (CIF) and received PKR 50,000 (300 USD) in May, 2019. With this money she opened a village shop.

She started her business from a small shop where she sold items like toffees, biscuits, washing powder, soap, etc. She said, *"Since the beginning, my brother has supported me. My husband and I did not know about wholesale and prices of items. My brother knows the city well; he travelled to the city and bought stock items for the shop. He also helped me identify the sale prices."*

She said that on the demand of her villagers, she has added milk, pickle, and tea packets in her shop. Luckily, the shop ran effortlessly, and she managed to make a profit. Her sales garnered up to PKR 1500 (USD 10) daily and she now saves roughly PKR. 300 to 400 as profit every day. *"I have repaid half of the loan in two instalments,"* she said while showing the receipts.

Before taking the CIF loan and starting her shop, IZGUL's family condition was difficult. They did not have enough money to go to the hospital and at times of need they had to borrow money from relatives. With her husband's farm labour and firewood collection and selling they could hardly afford to properly feed themselves and their children. Now, the family's economic situation has begun to improve. All children, except the youngest, are finally enrolled in a nearby school. In addition to dates, rice and potatoes that they receive in return of farm labour, now they can now afford seasonal vegetables, milk and eggs for consumption. They do not need to borrow money in emergencies, and they have enough savings for difficult times. She said, *"I also save money in the CO meetings monthly, and the president of the CO encourages me to be punctual in meetings."*

IZGUL has demonstrated excellent entrepreneurial skills. She is planning to add more items and scale up her shop to increase sales. She said that she wants to educate her children and improve her living standards. *"We will renovate our house soon, as we fear it may fall anytime on a rainy day,"* IZ said. Her husband and brother are happy and support her as she shares her plans with a smile on her face.



There is trust and social cohesion between the villagers and they help each other in emergency situations. Her brother and her CO members have proved to be crucial for her survival. The social capital she has developed over a period of time has contributed in improving her social and economic conditions.

## Conclusion

Izgul's case study has attempted to demonstrate the household's economic and social position based on education skills, occupation, income, assets and health status. It has revealed that the family lived below-subsistence, and her health condition was unacceptable. Her sources of income were inadequate to meet the basic needs of her family. Social mobilisation and CIF provided by National Rural Support Programme, under EU funded BRACE Programme, has begun to transform her household's socio-economic conditions. The family's social, financial and human capital is now on a progressive trajectory. Izgul is more confident and has further ideas to improve her and her family's lives and livelihoods.

Conclusively Izgul said, *"When the poor get organised, various avenues for improvement can become available. In my case, becoming a CO member and accessing CIF loan has been critical to my progress. Now I can not only dream about a better future, but also act to realise that dream"*.