

Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

# NEWSLETTER

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EUROPEAN UNION



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FOR BRACE PROGRAMME'S GRANT COMPONENT



PROGRAMME TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNER





# Breaking the Barriers - Opportunities Under the European Union-Funded BRACE Programme

Sabiha, a mother of six children, lives in a remote village in union council Nodiz of district Kech in Balochistan. She appears to be an energetic and cheerful woman who was content and happy in her life when we interviewed her. Her contentment stroke us as odd given that she is living in a remote village with minimal opportunities to earn, far from basic health and education facilities. She attributes this happiness to the recent increase in her income due to the opportunities provided to her by the EU-funded BRACE Programme.

She started her story by saying, "I felt fortunate when I learned that I was selected by the Community Organisation members for an Income Generating Grant (IGG). There are many deserving families in this settlement but they know the hardship I was going through to earn two meals a day." She whispered, "My husband is an addict. He does not care even if we starve to death." Her poverty score is 16, which means her financial standing makes her eligible for a grant under the EU-funded BRACE Programme. Her eldest son had dropped out from his school at an early age to earn living as daily wage labourer. The younger ones never got admitted.



Sabiha purchased a Solar Panel from the amount given as Income Generating Grant

In this backdrop, National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) under the IGG component of the EU-funded BRACE Programme provided her PKR 33,400 in October 2019, to initiate an income generating activity to improve her family livelihood. The IGGs are provided to poorest community members, especially women to use in a productive activity.

Previously, Sabiha used to do embroidery work for villagers and she had also learned stitching clothes from a neighbour but she could not utilise these skills as she did not have a sewing machine or the required resources for embroidery work. With the amount given as IGG, she purchased a sewing machine, an electric motor, a battery and a solar panel to generate electricity. She says she started stitching clothes at home. "Fortunately, the amount was enough to buy a solar panel, a battery and an electric motor with a sewing machine, which made it easier for me to stitch more dresses", says Sabiha.

First, she sewed clothes for her children, and then she stitched a few dresses for women in her neighbourhood. She says, "I started to get more orders as they liked my design and stitching. I charge PKR 250 - 300 per dress. I know this is not much but I also know my fellow villagers cannot afford more than this.

In a wedding season and on Eid, I get more orders and I can stitch four or five dresses a day."

Sabiha states that her current happiness in life is because of her financial independence that she has recently gained through her own hard work using her existing skills with the support of IGG. She continued, "They [NRSP] had also given me a three-day training [on enterprise development]. I was told not to spend all earning on daily consumption. I was advised to save profits. When I started to earn from stitching clothes, I thought of opening a shop at home. I gave PKR 15,000 from my earnings to my son who brought stock for a small grocery shop. Initially, I kept sweets, chips, washing powder, soap, and other small items for sale. I am extremely happy to be able to earn and fulfill our daily needs. Today, I earn PKR 6,000 - 7,000 from stitching clothes on monthly basis and PKR 15,000- 18,000 from the home-based grocery shop."

Sabiha demonstrates her excellent entrepreneurial skills and teaches us a lesson that everyone has a potential to do more, and with the right opportunities such as the one Sabiha got through the BRACE Programme, men and women can improve their livelihood.



## SUCCESS STORY

# Earning from One's Own Home in Loralai

Bibi Amina belongs to a poor and traditional family where women are not allowed to work and earn for the household. Although her family is rigid, she always strived for the betterment of her children. She enrolled her children in a local school and paid their fees through her savings.

Bibi Amina is 45 years old and has been married for 15 years. She has 10 children: five of them girls. Her husband is unable to work due to a serious health issue. Her two sons, in their teens, are working on daily wages and are bread winners of the family.

She shared that one day a team from Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) visited her village Dargai Kalan in Union Council Lahore in District Loralai. They gathered all the local women at her home and mobilised them on the overall process of BRACE Income Generating Grant (IGG) intervention and its benefits for the poor families. They organised women into community institutions (CIs). After that, they formed a Community Organisation (CO) named Awami Ikhlas Mohallah Tanzeem and federated them



Bibi Amna's name was finalised for IGG asset of three goats and was trained in developing an Income Generating plan

into a Village Organisation (VO). After some days, a livelihood team visited her village and nominated her for the IGG as she had a poverty score of 18. The VO finalised her name for the IGG asset of three goats and helped her develop an Income Generating plan.

"It made me so joyful when I received my own livestock at my home", shared teary eyed Bibi Amina. Now she has her own source of income and has started earning through her livestock as they have

increased in number from three to seven.

She is not only contributing to her family income but also saving money for her children's education by selling one of the goats periodically.

Bibi Amina concluded her story, "Now I am earning from my own home and independently providing support to my family. I am always thankful to BRACE Programme for organising us, training us and providing this wonderful asset."

## INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

# Empowering Widows under the BRACE Programme in Khuzdar

European Union in Pakistan aims at drawing attention to the plight of widows and galvanising the unique support that they need under Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme.

This Programme is an opportunity for action towards achieving full rights and recognition for widows. This includes providing them with



Raheema and her son worked very hard to nourish their livestock and increased the number of goats from three to eight



information on access to a fair share of their inheritance, land and productive resources; pensions and social protection that are not based on marital status alone; decent work and equal pay; and education and training opportunities. Empowering widows to support themselves and their families also means addressing social stigmas that create exclusion, and discriminatory or harmful practices.

Raheema, widowed for the last five years, lives with her only son. She is a member of the Community Organisation Bitulfut from Village Bhit in Union Council Bhalonk of District Khuzdar.

She received three goats as an Income



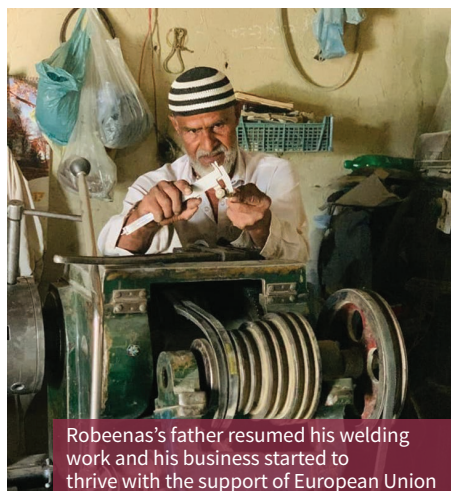
Generating Grant in October 2019 with the help of Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP). She and her son worked very hard to nourish their livestock and increased the number of goats from three to eight.

Since then, she has sold a couple of the goats when she needed cash. She still maintains six of them which she plans on increasing. Raheema happily declared that those goats were tremendous support to her income.

## RESEARCH

# Improving Rural Livelihoods through Bottom-up Development Approach in Balochistan

Balochistan is not only the poorest province of the country but also the most susceptible to welfare shocks, including natural disasters, macroeconomic adjustment and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Bank's Pakistan update of April 2021 noted that the pandemic "is expected to have the largest increase in poverty incidence" in Balochistan.



Robeenas's father resumed his welding work and his business started to thrive with the support of European Union



BRACE RSPN team spreading smiles and hope in the rural communities of Balochistan

The Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) conducted a survey, commissioned by RSPN in three districts of Balochistan (Kech, Khuzdar and Loralai) in April 2021 to assess how the European Union supported Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE)

Programme had impacted poor households. The grant component of BRACE is being implemented in nine districts by National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN).

The poor were identified by using data



from the poverty scorecard, developed by the World Bank, which is used by several government and donor-aided programmes. Three interventions by BRACE helped more than 10,000 poor households when their economic condition was becoming progressively worse. One third of the beneficiaries received this assistance in 2019 and two-thirds in 2020. One intervention is Community Investment (CIF), an interest-free loan from a revolving fund managed by community institutions. The average loan amount was PKR. 27,500, which the beneficiaries invested in livestock, agriculture and micro-enterprises. This increased average monthly income by PKR. 1,600, which is 11 percent of this group's average income.

The poorest among the poor were given a different intervention – Income Generating Grant, a productive grant of PKR. 47,000 each on average (in comparison, the Benazir Income Support Programme provide PKR. 24,000 per as grant to eligible families). This, too, was invested in livestock, agriculture, and micro-enterprises. It increased average monthly income by PKR. 3,100, which is 23 percent of this group's average income. The third intervention – Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) – increased average income by PKR. 3,300 per month, or 16 percent of the beneficiary group's average income. Eighty percent of the sampled beneficiaries had acquired training in sewing, cutting and tailoring, and the remainder in various other trades.

The survey also revealed that 47 percent of interest-free loan beneficiary households, 45 percent of productive grants beneficiary households and 51 percent of TVET beneficiary households to higher band of the poverty scorecard, from lower band 0-23 (poorest band) to 24-100, non-poor band.



Rural households are given an interest-free loan from a revolving fund managed by community institutions

The main uses of increased income across all three beneficiary groups were expenditures on food, clothes, health care and children's education. These findings came from qualitative evidence collected through female and male beneficiary focus groups. Beneficiaries consistently pointed to several specific ways in which their additional income helped improve food consumption for all household members (including children), access to health care (particularly for women and children), and children's education.

The beneficiaries, as listed in the records, are overwhelmingly women, but activities supported through the three interventions are household activities: the listed recipients as well as the spouses are involved in decision making, and the spouses and other household members often contribute labour. Approximately 65 percent of the female beneficiaries contribute labour to income-generating activities, but their dependence on their husbands is greater than that of the men on their wives.



Community Investment Fund is invested in livestock, agriculture and micro-enterprises



Each of the three interventions opens up opportunities for the poor. Every household decides what suits them in view of their capabilities, local markets and constraints. The implementing partners don't tell them how they should use their investment. As a result, the poor in each area make their investments in dozens of ways, and the range of their choices is not adequately captured by the three categories of livestock, agriculture, and micro-enterprise.

The process that enables the poor to identify opportunities is called

the micro investment plan. This, in essence, is a conversation with an open mind in a village setting, facilitated by the RSPs for small self-help groups of 15-25 women or men. The implementing RSPs offer capital and training, knowing from experience that the poor, when engaged as partners in honest discussion, look for opportunity, not handouts. The RSPs do not impose decisions based on market surveys or area plans or because experts say that poultry, goats, sheep, shops, embroidery, or donkey carts are good for the poor.

The implication is that an investment is pro-poor only if poor households are empowered to identify and implement it. Poverty exists at the household level, and it cannot be reduced unless poor households are identified, organised, and assisted. Administrative and elected institutions have their own strengths but they cannot identify and organise poor households. This is a challenge for which independent support organisations such as the RSPs were established, and for which, over the years, governments and donors across the country have supported them.

## CASE STUDY

# Rural Communities Covering their Medical Expenses

## Alam Khan – Income Generating Grant Beneficiary from Khuzdar

The rural communities of Balochistan might be the most hardworking in the country. With rugged terrains, scorching weather, limited drinking water and basic health facilities, every day is a new challenge.

Access to medical facilities is the major issue in rural health in Pakistan. Even in the Balochistan province where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, the resources are concentrated in the cities. Due to the long distances between the rural communities and health centres, it becomes extremely difficult for the people to access these facilities.

54-year-old widow, Alam Khan is chronically ill. She belongs from Union Council Bhalonk, Village Shank from District Khuzdar. Despite having a long-term health condition, she is the sole bread earner of her family. Under the European Union funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme, she became an Income

Generating Grant beneficiary and received 3 goats in October 2020. With sheer hard work, now she has increased the number to 6. Alam had sold her 7th goat for her medical

expenses. She feels much better now and thanks the efforts of the European Union and Rural Support Programmes of Pakistan in uplifting her life.



BRACE Programme Team from RSPN visiting Alam Khan from Khuzdar



## CASE STUDY

# Sheep: A Source of Income for the Rural Communities of Balochistan

## Zarmoorah – Income Generating Grant Beneficiary from Zhob

46-year-old Zarmoorah lives in Union Council Garda Babar from District Zhob. She lives with her husband Muhammad Khan and their 6 children (4 daughters and 2 sons). They have a Poverty Score of 7. Muhammad Khan, the only breadwinner of the family works as a daily wage worker, lifting and cutting stones, earning PKR. 5000 to 7000 per month. The family also grows potatoes on the small piece of land they have, which gives them a profit of PKR 20,000 to 25,000 per year.

In October 2019, Zarmoorah received 6 sheep as an Income Generating Grant (IGG) under the European Union funded BRACE Programme. Since then, the family has increased



Zarmoorah shears the sheep twice a year and sells the produce together for 1500 PKR



the sheep to 12; 3 are expected to give birth again shortly.

Zarmoorah shares that they try to use each and every byproduct of their sheep, not letting anything go to waste. She shears the sheep twice a year and sells the produce together for PKR 1500. Further, she collects the manure and sells them every month for PKR 900. “We have had kehwa all our lives; we would only have milk tea when serving it to guests. But each pack of milk costs PKR 40. Which was difficult for us to afford.” Now the family is happy to have their fill of milk, as the sheep give up to 2 kilos of milk every day in the spring and summer season. The family is looking forward to increase their herd and make a source of income out of this, as their children are very young and unable to earn right now.



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

# World Environment Day

Pakistan, in collaboration with the United Nation's Environment Programme, will be the global host for the World Environment Day to highlight the importance of ecosystem restoration this year.

European Union-funded BRACE Programme, together with the assistance of Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP), celebrated "World Environment Day 2021" in BRACE Districts of Pishin and Khuzdar by arranging an awareness walk and displaying awareness messages for the public. The walk was led by the representative of the Government of Balochistan, Director of the Environment Department, Bilal Ahmed Kasi.

The theme for World Environment Day 2021 was 'Ecosystem Restoration'. This year, World Environment Day will kick off the United Nation Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), a global mission to revive billions of hectares from forests to farmlands; from the top of the mountains to the depth of the seas. Moreover, to stimulate attention and actions for



The theme for World Environment Day 2021 was 'Ecosystem Restoration'

improving the environment, BRSP district Loralai organised a seminar. Assistant Commissioner, Yahya Khan Kakar, Deputy Director Social Welfare Department, Divisional

Director Labor Department Meerat Khan, and representatives of Village Organisation (VO) and Local Support Organisation (LSO) participated in the seminar.



BRSP stimulating attention and actions for improving the environment with the support of Government officials



The theme for World Environment Day 2021 was 'Ecosystem Restoration'



## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

# Youth Recreational Activity

The BRACE Programme funded by the European Union in Pakistan plans to involve 21,100 youth through 422 Youth Recreational Activities in nine target districts of BRACE.

To engage youth in a healthy and recreational activity, football matches were organised with more than 150 players from different teams in Union Council Ajram, District Pishin. Altogether, 16 teams participated and



Final match was played between Kakar Sports and Young Stylish Sulaiman Khel team



Winning Team of the Tournament

the final match was played between Kakar Sports and Young Stylish Sulaiman Khel team. Kakar Sports were declared as the winning team. Former Councilor of the Union Council, Paiyend Khan was the chief guest of the event. President of the Nowjawan Election Committee and tribal leaders also graced the event with their presence. So far, BRSP under BRACE has conducted 359 events in which a large number of youth have participated.



Till date, BRSP has conducted 359 youth recreational events

## COMMUNITY

# Village Development Plan

A Village Development Plan (VDP) is a plan which includes development initiatives at the village level, as decided by the Village Organisation (VO) and its member Community Organisation (CO) in their Micro Investment Plans (MIPs). It consists of activities (large and small, cash and cash-less) which the VO aims to achieve. Social mobilisation outreach, youth development activities, adult literacy & numeracy skills, inclusion of the poor, women, disabled, transgender, ethnic/religious minorities, gender mainstreaming and women's practical and strategic needs remain common themes in the VDP.

A (VDP) exercise was conducted at village Tarkha China, Union Council Khan Gul, District Loralai. The exercise was a joint participatory development planning that not only increased the capacity of citizens, communities,

marginalised groups, especially women to state their rights through resolutions but also hold local authorities responsible for resource mobilisation, execution of relevant and efficient public service delivery.



Joint participatory development planning exercise increasing the capacity of marginalised groups, especially women



## Awareness Session on Prevention of COVID-19 among Students and Teachers by LSO Gowarikh

The members of Local Support Organisation Gowarikh, Union Council Abi Noghy, District Khuzdar, in collaboration with the headmaster of Government Boys High School Henar Noghy, conducted an awareness session on prevention of COVID-19 among students and teachers. A complete package on practical use

of protective masks, gloves, soaps, and thermometres were given. Furthermore, the school's classrooms and science halls were also sprayed with antiseptic sprays.

This awareness session will be continued in the coming days to all the schools and other religious seminaries of the Union Council.



practical use of protective masks, gloves, soaps, and thermometres were given to the students



Students from Khuzdar following the Government SOPs for prevention of COVID-19

### GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY LINKAGES

## Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) Meeting Organised by NRSP in District Kech

National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) organised a meeting of Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) on 15th June, 2021 at NRSP's Regional Office in Turbat, Kech. Meeting was chaired by Mr. Zahoor-ul-Hassan, Divisional Director Local Government and Rural Development. In the meeting,

19 people participated including Mr. Muhammad Hassan, Assistant Director Local Government, Dr. Rahim District Health Officer, Mr. Ghafoor Dashti, District Education Officer from Education Department, Mr. Muneer Ahmed, Assistant Director Local Government, Mr. Ijaz Rasheed, Sub-Divisional

Officer Irrigation, Mr. Dad Karim Sub-Divisional Officer Public Health Engineering Department, Mr. Nisar Ahmed, Administrative Officer Municipal Corporation, Mr. Niaz Ahmed, District Coordinator for Technical Assistance team, President District LSO Network, Mr. Saeed Ahmed, Senior Programme



Officer MER-BRACE, Mr. Nabeel Ahmed, Regional Programme Officer NRSP, and NRSP's senior staff.

During the meeting, Mr. Saeed Ahmed presented progress of BRACE Programme. Mr. Abdul Salam from Physical Infrastructure and Technology Development and Mr. Fida Ahmed District Engineer summarised progress of Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) schemes including physical and financial progress of the completed and ongoing schemes in UCs Balich, Balnigore, Bishuli, Drachko, Dandar, Gayab, Gishkor, Gomazi, Hoshab, Khairabad, Kuddan, Kunchiti, Nasirabad, Nodiz, Phullabad, Sami, Sangahe, Shahrak, Solband and Tijaban. During the progress presentation, Mr. Zahoor ul Hassan, Divisional Director Local Government, discussed quality of the sign boards. He suggested that all line department heads should attend such JDDC meetings. After that, participants discussed the poor condition of Government Boys Primary School in Koh-e-Bun, Kasar. Mr. Zahoor ul Hassan requested Mr. Ghafoor Dashti to



Mr. Zahoor-ul-Hassan, Divisional Director Local Government and Rural Development Department, Government of Balochistan chairing the JDDC meeting

visit all completed and ongoing schools and share his field visit report to NRSP. Mr. Ghafoor Dashti responded by saying that his team had visited a number of schools but after COVID-19 pandemic they stopped their field activities. In addition, Mr. Muhammad Hassan inquired from NRSP staff if they

had handed over any scheme to the concerned line department after completion. Mr. Abdul Salam responded that before initiating any CPI scheme, NRSP would take NOC from the concerned line department and after completion, they always shared the scheme with them.

Mr. Saeed Ahmed suggested to the JDDC members to plan a joint visit with NRSP team and inspect the completed and ongoing CPI schemes. The meeting was concluded with the final remarks by Mr. Zahoor ul Hassan, Divisional Director of Local Government and Rural Development. He emphasised on improved coordination and partnership amongst all the concerned line departments, which would ultimately ensure successful collaboration between the Government and BRACE Programme. At the end of meeting, Mr. Nabeel Ahmed, NRSP's Regional Programme Officer from Kech thanked all participants.



The meeting emphasised on improved coordination and partnership amongst all the concerned line departments, which would ultimately ensure successful collaboration between the Government and BRACE Programme



The European Union Funded

# BRACE Programme

Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme is supported by the European Union (EU) and is being implemented in close collaboration with the Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD) Department of the Government of Balochistan (GoB). The Grant component of this five year (2017-2022) Programme is being implemented by Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) in nine districts of Balochistan. BRACE is working in Jhal Magsi, Kech, Khuzdar, Killa Abdullah, Loralai, Pishin, Duki, Washuk and Zhob. The programme is technically supported by DAI-Human Dynamics (DAI-HD), a company that supports Government of Balochistan in fostering an enabling environment for strengthening the capacities of local authorities to manage and involve communities in the statutory local public sector planning, financing and implementation processes.



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