

SCALING UP COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

**A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL
MOBILIZATION BEST-PRACTICES**

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1. Introduction

Local Support Organizations (LSOs), defined as grassroots development organizations, are emerging all over Pakistan. These organizations are usually based at the Union Council (UC) Level, formed from clusters of informal community-based organizations (COs), and serve as intermediaries between community groups and formal institutions, including non-governmental organizations and the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs), donors, and the government.¹ As COs are proliferating, there is an increasing demand for these intermediary organizations to support community-based organizations in the long-term and development at large.

This paper will discuss the theory behind these support organizations and evaluate their performance by examining cases from Districts Palundari and Sehansa in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and District Karak in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).² In each of these cases, members of both LSO and at least two COs were interviewed. In particular, the paper will document best practices of these intermediary organizations to provide positive strategies for other newly formed LSOs.

2. Background

2.1 Organizational Model of Development in Pakistan

The philosophy of LSO's emerges from the organizational model of development. The model was conceived in the nineteenth century by two European utopian socialists, Robert Owen from England and Charles Fourier from France. The basic assumption of this model is that rural communities have pre-existing tradition supporting collective behavior: reciprocal obligations, and an appreciation for economies of scale. Further, these communities exist in a deeply hierarchical environment where individuals are virtually powerless. The model advocates the formation of cooperatives or grassroots self-help groups that can mitigate the vulnerability of individual households and harness their potential by ensuring economies of scale in development activity³

This organizational model has been successfully implemented in Pakistan since the 1980s, first in the Northern Areas by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and later replicated in the four provinces and AJK. Several independent studies have

¹ RSPs are commonly known as quasi-nongovernmental organizations and often receive some government funds.

² These two districts were selected by the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) because the local support organizations were mature (had been working for three or more years and received external funding) and were engaged in project implementation. The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) works in AJK and the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) works in NWFP.

³ See Khan, Mahmood Hasan. 1992. *Community Organizations and Rural Development*. Lahore: Vanguard Books.

prove that there is a direct correlation between social mobilization and the creation of COs and improvements in local livelihoods.⁴

Conceptually, this model has three components: development of community organizations (COs); presence of a formal support organization, e.g. a RSP; and community members or program beneficiaries interested in forming cooperatives. The model encourages the formation of community groups on a sub-village or village level to: encourage a participatory and equitable method of governance; engage in productive activities that have a positive impact on people's livelihoods and welfare; e.g. infrastructure projects; and promote the concept of saving to reduce household vulnerability.

The primary objective of the RSP is to serve as a catalyst for social mobilization by engaging community members, developing their interest in common development activities, and providing them technical advice when necessary. The reciprocal partnership between a CO and a RSP is cemented upon the basis of a collective development activity, e.g. an infrastructure or agriculture project and micro credit that improves the well-being of the village (usually implemented once the organization has matured).⁵ For example, any development activity is usually implemented on a cost-sharing basis, where the support organization provides technical support as well as 50 to 80 percent of the funds, and the community provides the balance amount of the project's costs, including an in-kind labour contribution.⁶

2.2 Emergence of Local Support Organizations (LSOs)

The LSO model was first envisioned in the 1980s by the development practitioners of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), who advocated the formation of clusters of community organizations to sustain social mobilization efforts and implement larger infrastructure projects.⁷ Given the high cost of development operations in the Northern Areas, the cluster organizations were meant to represent community organizations, e.g. facilitate linkages with external agencies, create a new generation of social organizers, and provide a mechanism to address development challenges on a larger geographic scale, eventually replacing the role of the RSP.⁸ AKRSP records show that a number of them are still functional around the management of micro hydel projects that require continuous maintenance and management.

⁴ See "Aga Khan Rural Support Program: Looking to the Future" World Bank. <http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoelib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/1E822F2E59382FDD852567F5005D8BF8>

⁵ The collective activity leads to the maturation of the NGO.

⁶ See Khan, Mahmood and Khan, Mahmood Hasan and Shoaib Sultan Khan. 1992. Rural Change in the Third World: Pakistan and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program. New York: Greenwood Press.

⁷ Other RSPs especially the National Rural Support Programme and the Sarhad Rural Support Programme were also supporting apex bodies of COs at village, union council and Tehsil levels in relatively mature communities.

⁸ See Khan, Mahmood and Khan, Mahmood Hasan and Shoaib Sultan Khan. 1992. Rural Change in the Third World: Pakistan and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program. New York: Greenwood Press.

Since the formation of clusters, the RSP institutional development model has gone through several iterations. In the late 1990s, RSPs started to formalize the clusters as Local Development Organizations (LDO). Again, the LDO-model was conceived as a broad-based, multi-purpose organization that could organize the common development issues of a particular locality, mainly at village level. However, over time, RSP staff witnessed a phenomenon where LDO's were becoming small professional NGOs, not necessarily committed to the participatory base of the community organization. To mitigate this "professional phenomena" in 2005, the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN) envisioned a national strategy to scale up existing community organizations or form LSOs. At the time of implementation, over 95 percent of community organizations were working informally on a sub-village level, i.e. they were not registered and had virtually no administrative and financial systems, preventing them from accessing additional donor funds.⁹

The primary function of the LSO is to support CO social mobilization and only serve as a technical advisor for large development projects that are beyond the capacity of village or community level organizations. To ensure that this form of institutional development would be sustainable, LSO development took place in two stages: COs would form a village development organization (VDO) at the level of a revenue village or village; and over time the VDOs would form a LSO. The specific responsibilities of a LSO are listed in detail in Annex I.

RSPs facilitate LSO formation on the UC level where COs cover at least 85 percent of the households. RSPN's role in the development of the LSO is to provide both financial and technical support. To begin with RSPN developed sample by-laws for the LSO, training modules for LSO activists, monitoring tools for the LSO programme, and conducted orientation and management training for RSP field actively involved in the LSO programme.¹⁰

The case studies discussed below provide a preliminary assessment of the LSO strategy and will document emerging best practices. While official LSO formation started in 2005, many organizations were independently evolving towards scaling up.

3. Institutional Building in AJK

3.1 Background

This study focuses on Local Support Organizations in two districts of AJK: Palundari, and Sehensa.¹¹ Social mobilization is a challenge in these regions because the population

⁹ In 2002, mature community organizations also began to register themselves as Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) as envisioned in the Local Government Ordinance, but even those organizations relied heavily on the technical support of the local RSP.

¹⁰ Azizi, Mohammad Ali. 2006 "Guidelines for the LSO Programme." Islamabad: Rural Support Programme Network.

¹¹ Three Local Support Organizations were studied for the purposes of this study, but the paper will focus on two as the third one was in the early stages of development.

(approximately 830,000 inhabitants), which is scattered widely, and many villages are not accessible by road.¹² According to NRSP's staff, in the early days of its operations, during the 1990s, the staff had to hike several hours to reach particular villages. The AJK government composed of a parliamentary body and an executive office which legally governed the area. Although in practice, the AJK Council, which reports to Islamabad has significant discretionary authority, due to the political instability of the greater region, the government's investment in development has been limited. Local livelihoods are based around subsistence agriculture, small businesses, and service in the Pakistan army. In addition, according to NRSP's staff, large minorities of local people are settled in the United Kingdom, as a result of which, foreign currency remittances also help sustain local livelihoods. The annual income per capita in Kashmir is higher than many parts of Pakistan; ranging from \$600 to \$6000.¹³ Similarly, literacy rates are also higher than Pakistan - approximately 95 percent for men and 88 percent for women.

While NRSP formally started implementing the LSO model in 2005, many COs were informally forming cluster organizations as early as 1994 in Palundari, suggesting that there was a real demand for village-level support organizations. This paper focuses on the experiences and lessons-learned of two LSOs in AJK: the Kiran Welfare Organization and the Rural Community Development Foundation (RCDF). The paper will first examine their history and achievements and then evaluate their lessons learned. KWO is an advanced LSO and is independent and autonomous from NRSP. RCDF works more closely with NRSP and is a master trainer for other LSOs in the region.

3.2 Kiran Welfare Organization

Vision: to create an environment where development opportunities are available to all segments of society, especially marginalized members without any particularity of gender.¹⁴

3.2.1 History

The Kiran Welfare Organization (KWO/Kiran) is located in the Palundari District, and has been working in the area since 1994, when NRSP established community organizations.¹⁵ In 1997, KWO elected a governing body from its CO membership, forming a first-generation LSO, following an activist workshop organized by NRSP, and formally registered itself in 1999. Today, Kiran has an extensive network, it works in 6 UCs and represents 61 community organizations, approximately 15 percent of the

¹² Profile of AJK Region Muzaffarabad, 2007. National Rural Support Programme.

¹³ See Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir web-site:

http://www.ajk.gov.pk/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2257&Itemid=144

¹⁴ See 2006 Annual Report of the Kiran Welfare Organization (KWO).

¹⁵ According to NRSP, Pallandri was recently made into a district, but its administrative units have not been demarcated.

households in their service-delivery area.¹⁶ According to KWO activists, the demand for Kiran was in part local. Given the absence of government, there was a genuine need for a regional forum that could consider macro-level development challenges. Today, Kiran is entirely self-sufficient at present based on a grant from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), funded by the World Bank.

According to the founders of Kiran, social mobilization was initially difficult given the lack of institutional development in the region. An executive member explained, “we would talk to people for hours on end to assure them that community organizations (and NRSP) were legitimate. People were suspicious of outsiders, especially because investors had come in from the outside in the early 1990s and had misappropriated local funds.” In addition, local familial allegiances and politics, or biraderism, prevented people from addressing regional development issues jointly as many even refused to sit together in the same room. Over time, NRSP and Kiran mitigated these impediments by showing people tangible benefits from development projects. For example, according to Kiran activists, the first tangible development project, a water supply project that channeled water from a distant water source to a tap in the village, convinced many skeptics. The fact that membership entirely composed of local residents helped in building the trust of the community. Over time, the creation of a common regional forum helped mitigate biraderi and other political differences that had factionalized the community. According to a member, “We continue to have our political differences, however, because of Kiran, we have learned to put them aside when working on development.”

3.2.2 Leadership & Structure

Following the LSO model, the general body of the KWO constitutes members of the 30 COs, including both men and women from a variety of backgrounds. The leadership of the LSO is a mixture of teachers (almost a third), retired army servicemen, and local businessmen. In addition, almost half of the members have studied till the 10th grade, a third have attended middle school, and a minority of the members hold a college or university degree.

The general body selects a 15-person administrative council that is supported by a board of directors. Kiran has six committees (4-5 members in each committee) composed by the general body on: health, infrastructure, agriculture, environment, credit, and monitoring. In addition to its volunteers, KWO has 11 paid staff members including an executive director who reports to the board of directors. The initial activists and volunteers continue to serve in the organization; some as paid employees and other as volunteers.

To maintain communication and keep abreast of CO progress, Kiran has institutionalized a four-step process for each CO meeting: 1) the governing body writes an agenda, 2) discusses the agenda; 3) formulates decisions; and 4) forwards the resolutions to Kiran, which files and processes the requests. While this is the only formal record that Kiran has

¹⁶ The 61 community organizations are composed of the following kinds of organizations: 29 male, 16 female, and 16 mixed (i.e. male and female). See NRSP Profile

of CO activity, there are many informal communication channels present. For example, to organize a community meeting, the executive body passes out messages verbally and via telephone. Often, many people will also congregate in the office, which is a central meeting point.

3.3 Kiran's Community Investments

3.3.1 Infrastructure Development

KWO has been successful in implementing projects that support all three sectors of the economy (small-scale businesses, a small service industry, and subsistence agriculture) through infrastructure development, skills-based trainings, and microcredit programmes. Based on interview data, Kiran has completed 32 water supply schemes (providing drinking water), seven lane projects approximately 22 km long (improving access to main roads), two water channels (providing irrigation to plots), and small bridges. Indirectly, all road construction projects also benefit social mobilization as they improve access and increase mobility. In 2006, Kiran spent Rs. 23, 74,438 on infrastructure projects; out of which COs contributed Rs. 668,380.¹⁷

3.3.2 Development of Human Resources

Kiran has sponsored 617 people through a variety of trainings including a community management skills training sponsored by NRSP, trainings on livestock, agriculture, and vocational trainings, e.g. sewing. In addition, between 1999 and 2003 they established five model schools focusing on activity-based learning. However, these later closed down because the teachers moved away. The development of human resources is Kiran's biggest asset. Trained individuals are both valuable resource people for Kiran, and also can serve as a new generation of local leaders and role models.

3.3.3 Health

Lack of access to a hospital was a huge problem for the community according to the older Kiran activists. The nearest hospital was three hours away and was an expensive roundtrip. In 2001, the Trust for Voluntary Organizations gave Kiran the funds to open and manage a maternity clinic. Government doctors staff the clinic, but Kiran's health committee supervises the clinic and ensures that the client's demands are met. According to Kiran, the clinic has handled 275 births since its inception and on an average serves 20 persons per day. The clinic also does preventive care and vaccinates women and children. The successful management and monitoring of this clinic suggests that Kiran has matured.

¹⁷ Kiran Welfare Organization Annual Report 2006.

3.3.4 Savings and Microcredit

KWO and affiliated community organizations have also been very successful in promoting savings and micro-credit. In total, the organizations affiliated with KWO have saved Rs. 4,590,000. According to their program officers, all COs are self-sufficient and are able to disburse small loans in the amount of Rs. 5000-15,000 through internal lending. KWO has also used internal lending to purchase seeds and fertilizer, illustrating another formal channel of communication between KWO and COs. Given that it is based on a real need, this channel will ensure a sustainable relationship.

Further, KWO has dispersed Rs. 6.5 million in loans in total to 333 beneficiaries; KWO has a 100 percent recovery rate. The loans are submitted to KWO's microcredit committee, who assess their merit based on social and technical indicators. KWO charges an 18 percent interest rate; the percentages are broken down as follows: 1) two percent goes to the person who facilitates the lending; 2) ten percent goes to the community organization; and 3) six percent goes to Kiran.

3.3.5 Natural Resource Management and Agriculture

To encourage better agricultural practices through the government's local agricultural department, Kiran has established 12 model farms and facilitated the purchase of seeds and fertilizer for the entire community at a wholesale discounted rate. Community organizations have also planted trees on 1000 acres, including fruit orchards.

3.4 Key Achievements

The most important achievements of Kiran are: 1) to foster peace within the community; 2) secure external funding from PPAF funded by the World Bank; 3) successfully partner with government and other agencies; and 4) diversify their portfolio of activities. According to scholars, societies that exist in conflict areas, especially where the presence of formal organizations like government is minimal, can become factionalized, and don't have local decision-making mechanisms. By local accounts, Palundari District fits this description as communities are polarized along political and biraderi lines. However, the introduction and institutionalization of Kiran provides a neutral channel to address development challenges and creates informal channels of communication to strengthen community ties.

In 2004, PPAF independently provided KWO Rs. 1,879,000 for CO capacity building projects, micro-credit, and community infrastructure¹⁸. This funding was critical in establishing Kiran's independence. NRSP facilitated KWO extensively through this process ensuring that they were able to provide the necessary audit and project documents. Also to qualify for this project, Kiran's program manager was sent to the Thardeep Rural Development Programme to receive management and financial training.

¹⁸ PPA provided Rs. 2,400,500 for capacity building; Rs. 2,374,439 for community infrastructure, and Rs. 4,500,00 for micro credit.

The grant from PPAF does not ensure sustainability for the organization as it is only for three years of activity. However, the grant allows them to build the capacity to attract other donors.

Kiran was also able to successfully partner with the government. According to Kiran activists, the government was inspired by Kiran's community investments and supported Kiran's agriculture programme by providing training and seeds and fertilizer at reduced rates. Further, they also provided funds for a model school.

Finally, Kiran's maturity is visible in the diversity of its projects. It has successfully implemented projects in the five key sectors of the RSPs, including education, health, agriculture/natural resource management, microcredit, and infrastructure development; social mobilization is a cross-cutting theme in all of these sectors. This diversification illustrates management skills, sectoral expertise, and mature relationships with multiple donors.

3.5 Achievement by Sector 2004-2005¹⁹

Intervention Benefited	# of COs benefited	# of Villages Benefited	# of H.H. Beneficiaries	# of Indirect Beneficiaries
Microcredit	21	21 (revenue villages 4)	232	1197
Physical Infrastructure	08	08	347	553
Basic Health Center	50	21 (revenue villages 6)	6755	54040
Poultry Development	17	17	51	5100
Training	09	52 (revenue villages 4)	225	1941
NRM	02	02	75	600
Total	52	(Revenue Villages 04 in case of BHC 6 revenue villages benefited)	7624	63,431

3.6 Lessons Learnt

KWO is a successful model for the development of Local Support Organizations (LSOs), from which other institutions can learn. In effect, it has developed into a "mini-RSP": it has a professional staff and a management system, which has developed a diverse

¹⁹ See Annual Report 2006. Kiran welfare organization.

program portfolio, and has close ties with grassroots organizations. Further, it has followed particular institutional practices that have been critical to its success that will be discussed below. It has also had continuity in its leadership, which has been necessary in providing stability and growth. At the time of this study, the administrative council of Kiran was composed of the first activists that NRSP had contacted in 1994, ensuring continuous leadership for over 10 years. Over time, the activists have received professional training that has enabled the organization to develop management systems.

Second, Kiran was able to provide a forum for developing the region's development agenda and programs that can implement the vision. As discussed above, the catalyst was the development of a tangible good - the water scheme. The projects enabled Kiran to win the trust of people, foster informal and formal communication with the COs, and create a sense of community.

Kiran has a devolved management style enabling efficient programming. For example, if a community organization has a microcredit query, it is passed on to the relevant committee, which has the necessary sectoral expertise. Efficient communication between KWO and the COs ensure future positive relationships.

Finally, critical to Kiran's success was the fact that NRSP invested heavily in its development in the early years of its inception, which resulted in fostering relationships with key donors and government officials, including the Vice President of the World Bank in Pakistan, many national parliamentarians and government officials.

4. Rural Community Development Foundation (RCDF)

Purpose: Social and economic development and bringing betterment in the lives of the common man.

4.1 History

The Rural Community Development Forum (RCDF) in Sehensa District of AJK has followed the classic model of LSO development discussed in the introduction. COs were formed in 1997 through NRSP's facilitation. RCDF was founded in 2002 when 60 percent of the households in their service-delivery area were members of COs. Initially RCDF had developed loose thematic clusters, but in 2006, it was reorganized into the current structure. In total, it represents 80 community organizations, 14 village development organizations and 1575 members, almost equally divided between men and women.²⁰

The formation of RCDF was both demand-based and encouraged by NRSP. According to interviews, the community in RCDF was as factionalized as the LSO in Palundari. The community demanded an institution to address community problems during a seed

²⁰ Members of COs form a village development organization (VDO) that is meant to address development issues at the level of a revenue village and facilitate internal lending. RCDF is composed of 37 male COs, 35 female COs, and 8 mix COs

shortage in the mid 1990s. Seeds were not available locally and often had to be purchased from Islamabad or Muzaffarabad, five to nine hours away by road. In response to the shortage, a group of individuals informally met together and organized the seed purchase for the community. The same individuals several years later formed community organizations that were clustered into RCDF. NRSP's Sehensa Field Unit Office also worked with local activists extensively and helped them shape RCDF.

4.2 Leadership and Structure

Profile of Shah Nawaz, President of RCDF

Shah Nawaz was a sergeant in the Pakistani army, which is a major employer of people in this region, after he completed his Matriculation. He also spent some time working in Saudi Arabia. Fifteen years ago, he returned to Sehensa and opened up a cloth shop. A friend of his was a manager of a community organization and an activist. As a favor to his friend, he supervised the construction of an irrigation channel. At first, he worked from a distance and kept his "hands off" from the project. One day when several workers did not show up, he was motivated to get his hands dirty and began to dig. He says that working with his hands was reassuring, and he felt he was contributing something and slept very well that night. Since then he has felt a stake in the development projects implemented by the community, and decided to formally invest his time as a manager of another community organization and eventually became President of RCDF.

Each village development organization nominates up to 3 members for the general council of the LSO. RCDF has a general body comprising of 35 general councilors. Through a consensus-building process of selection, these 35 councilors in turn form the executive body (11 men and 7 women). RCDF's service-delivery area is divided into three clusters: Kritote, Pleer, and Phota. RCDF has created development plans for 42 COs and aims to create plans for all community organizations. According to RCDF, this plan is created in partnership with the respective COs, articulates their development needs, and creates a roadmap by which to promote accountability and measure progress. At the time of the interview, the organization had one staff member, a part-time accountant

4.2.1 LSO vs. VDO

In RCDF's current structure, the roles of the LSO and VDO overlap. In theory, the VDO is meant to have a coordination role at the village level, while the LSO fulfills the same role at the UC level. The major difference between their roles is the fact that VDO is meant to support internal-lending and coordinate community infrastructure programs at the village level, while the LSO is meant to provide wholesale credit and support larger infrastructure programs. In reality, at this early stage of development, the roles of the LSO and the VDO often intersect as the division of labor is left up to the communities.

For example, RCDF is directly facilitating the internal lending in the area. The basic model for distribution of roles and responsibilities amongst CO, VDO and LSO is that the COs will take care of household level activities like savings, micro credit, and skills development, the VDO will do village level development activities like village development planning, internal lending, VO Banking and infrastructure building, and the LSO will take responsibility for UC level issues like UC level planning, formation of new COs to increase coverage, reactivation of dormant COs and management of a development funds received from RSPN or any other sources..

The role of the VDO is critical to this model. As the number of community organizations grows, it is necessary to have a governance body at the village level to coordinate their activity. This body also provides the main formal communication channel between the CO and the LSO and can serve as a village arbitration committee. For example, if there are problems with credit retrieval, the VDO informs the LSO and can help facilitate the problem. In addition, the VDO is critical to developing village development plans since it has resource people who can help the COs identify and prioritize village needs.

4.3 RCDF's Community Investments

Almost 60 percent of the households in RCDF's service-delivery area fall under the poor category while 25 percent are better off.²¹ Similar to Palundari, RCDF faces similar development challenges as livelihoods are based on subsistence agriculture, small businesses, and service-delivery.

4.3.1 Infrastructure Development

RCDF is emerging as a successful service-provider in the area. It has provided clean drinking water to 250 households by constructing 40 hand pumps and 17 wells. Further, it has built three roads, linking household clusters to the main road, and soled 20 streets. At present, the local community to the VDO, which helps organize an implementation plan, communicates the development needs. The LSO is the liaison to NRSP, who was helping to fund this initiative, and in turn the VDO helps the LSO monitor the progress of the road.

RCDF has also been involved in large-scale construction projects, e.g., it has worked on construction within 15 public schools, and provided link roads, bridges, hand pumps, and wells partnering with the local government department and NRSP. It has also worked on the development of 10 mosques with the AJK Community Development Program, an initiative of the local government department.

²¹ Poverty ranking figures are based on the scale used by the RSPs.

4.3.2 Development of Human Resources

RCDF has organized community and leadership management skills training and vocational trainings with the help of NRSP. The community management training familiarizes community members with the principles of participatory development, conflict resolution, and team-building. The leadership training builds on the community management training and focuses on management-skills development.

Through the trainings provided by NRSP, RCDF has created a roster of resource people in each of the sectors the organization is engaged in: social mobilization, human resource development, natural resource management, and micro credit, which ensures that there is staff capacity to ensure continuity of its program areas. In the future it could generate income through consultancies.

4.3.3 Savings and Microcredit

RCDF has channeled part of its internal savings, approximately Rs. 1,100,000 and money borrowed from NRSP to purchase seeds and fertilizer at wholesale prices. This strategy allows the organizations to benefit from the economies of scale and illustrates a successful management model. Almost all of the 1575 households have benefited from this arrangement. Unlike Kiran, RCDF uses its internal lending to support education and health activities.

RCDF takes whole sale credit from NRSP at 15 percent and gives it out to its members at 20 percent. Each cluster has established a credit operation unit, which evaluates the application and submits it to the central office for final approval. Out of the 5% service charge, 2% is paid to the cluster units and 3% is retained by the central unit.

4.3.4 Natural Resource Management

RCDF is engaged in monitoring of forest resources through its village development organizations, a new area for the RSPs. RCDF partners with the forestry departments and helps in maintaining watch posts and reports any suspicious activity.

Through internal lending and direct project funding, RCDF has developed agricultural practices, e.g. fruit and vegetable plantation. The Pakistan Council of Research on Water Resources (PCRWR) has expressed an interest in developing new irrigation techniques in this area.

4.3.5 Social Sector Services

Unlike Kiran, which resembles a professional development organization, RCDF basically supports ad hoc charities like providing financial assistance to the poor, orphans, widows and students. Since its formation, it has spent Rs. 200,000 on general welfare activities.²²

²² It is important to emphasize the unprofessional nature of the work is derived from its ad hoc nature as opposed to the substantive quality of the work.

4.4 Key Achievements

RCDF has had four significant achievements since its formation: 1) Creating village development plans for over half of its member organizations; 2) Using savings and micro credit to improve the productive capacity of the village; 3) Receiving an endowment from RSPN in the amount of 2 million; 4) Successfully mobilizing the VDO network to identify local needs.

According to RCDF members, having village development plans in place enabled many of the partnerships with external agencies. For example, PCRWR contacted RCDF to work on irrigation because they had already chalked out a development plan. In fact, according to RCDF, PCRWR approached local activists from a VDO in a mosque and were guided to RCDF.

The seed village project where RCDF provided funding to an individual to purchase seeds and fertilizer at wholesale prices has potential to give local farmers a comparative advantage and increase their earning potential.

In 2006, RSPN provided RCDF 2 million as an endowment fund to support its institutional development because of its institutional maturity. RCDF invested Rs. 1 million in an endowment and the remaining rupees 1 million is used for internal lending. The interest of these funds pay for office expenses and the salary of one accountant, the only paid staff on board. With the profits earned from lending, RCDF re-invests Rs. 2000/month to support its endowment.

Based on interviews and anecdotes, RCDF successfully mobilizes the VDO network to prioritize the community's needs and to identify the poorest households. According to interviews with a women's CO in Kritote village, RCDF passed on a training opportunity to them and has recommended two individuals in the village for a livestock project sponsored by the government. The program provided 40 chicks and training on how to care for them. The two women were identified by the CO and confirmed by the VDO. According to these women, RCDF's executive members often attend their meetings, liaise between the RSP and the community organization, and keep them informed of any relevant development activity. The COs also send their meeting resolutions to RCDF articulating their particular needs. In turn, the VDOs help coordinate between RCDF and individual households. This new division of labor is resulting in effective and efficient needs identification and enabling partnerships with external agencies.

4.5 Lessons Learnt

The RCDF case suggests that creating village development plans are critical for attracting funding from external sources and also help the community organizations chart their development.

Maintaining links between COs and LSOs is critical as it enables matching development opportunities with the need of specific villages. VDOs in this case play a coordinating role, while the COs have a critical role to play in helping to identify the most needy households.

Investing savings in activities that improve the productive capacity of communities will result in greater dividends and ensure sustainability.

5. Institutional Development in Karak, NWFP

Karak District in NWFP is approximately five hours drive from Islamabad. It has a population of 510,000 and lies within one of the most difficult development areas in Pakistan, bordering the Waziristan Agency and many of the border districts that are experiencing religious extremism. According to the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), in 2002 NGOs were frequently under attack from religious leaders who accused them of turning people away from Islam.

The area is not irrigated and receives very little rainfall. Interestingly, the district also has comparatively one of the higher literacy rates in the country. Approximately 62 percent of individuals have enrolled in primary schools, a rate that is comparable to the wealthier, more liberal Northern Districts.²³

SRSP works in this district and has mobilized 461 male community organizations and 291 women's organizations, with a total outreach to 22,507 households.²⁴ To date, SRSP has invested Rs. 101,329,954 in Karak for various community infrastructure projects.

5.1 Chenghose Welfare Society, Latamber

Vision: For the social and moral up lift of local community working and participation with government line agencies and partner NGOs through sustainable and integrated development approaches for enhancement of household income and living standards . . .

5.1.1 History

The Chenghose Welfare Society (Chenghose/CWS) was formed in 2000. However, the seeds of the organization were sown two decades before in the aftermath of a major bus accident where many young men died in part because there were no blood banks. In response, several young adults formed a blood donation group, and then led local youth

²³ Seventy percent of individuals in Abottabad have enrolled in primary school.

²⁴ Briefing on SRSP Kohat Region. May 2007.

campaigns against drug-use and promoting education. Many of the present-day members of the Chenghose Welfare Society belonged to that youth group. SRSP started forming community organizations in Latamber in 1996, but pulled out of the district in 2002 because of funding shortages. However, inspired by SRSP-sponsored field visits to Rawalakot, CWS continued its activities. At that time it was supported by Khwendo Kor (KK), an organization supporting women and children, who helped build the staff capacity of CWS through various trainings, including participatory rural appraisal, proposal development, and financial training.. KK also facilitated links with external actors including the Al-Shifa Hospital, which led to the health programming discussed below. In 2000, to facilitate regional development, it formed 6 clusters to coordinate the development activity in 6 villages.

At that time, the organization also encountered fierce resistance from religious leaders who were supported by local government officials. According to activists, partly as a defensive response, they boldly opened an office in the main bazaar or market, and continued their program activities. In 2002, some individuals affiliated with local political parties opened fire on Farakh Dil, the CWS Chairman. CWS hired a lawyer and met with influential local individuals to convince them of their approach. According to the Chairman, the critics were convinced by the actual development work. Several religious leaders who initially opposed CWS are now members of community organizations. CWS formally registered itself in 2004 and today is working in the entire Union Council, divided into five blocks or clusters.

5.1.2 Leadership and Structure

According to community members, the force behind CWS is the Chairman Farakh Dil, whose small stature and humble appearance are misleading. He has galvanized the majority of the community behind his vision of community mobilization over the last seven years. He has a master's degree and is a primary school teacher in Latamber.

At present, Chenghose represents 48 Community Organizations, and 15 others will be joining shortly. The two office bearers of the CO form the general body of the organization, and they in turn select 13 executive members, 10 men and three women. General body members form the following committees: 1) social mobilization; 2) agriculture; 3) health, 4) finance/audit; 5) sports, 6) water management; 7) education; 8) land management, and 9) peace committee. At present their savings amount to Rs. 35,000 in total and they earn Rs. 15,000 per month in interest from an RSPN-sponsored endowment fund to pay for their office expenses.

CWS's network of COs is tightly knit. Formal meetings are well attended and according to community organizations, they often pass on resolutions of their meetings to Chenghose in a written format. The respective committee directly follows up all requests on. In addition, informal exchanges are on going.

5.2 Chenghose's Community Investments

Latamber Union Council, with a population of 57,000, is one of the poorest, according to CWS; approximately 70 percent of the households belong to the very poor category. The local economy is dependent on subsistence agriculture (wheat, maize, lobia, daal, kana, and sheeshum), the service industry, and livestock.

Because SRSP pulled out of the district in 2002, traditional development activities were slow to start. Unlike the other LSOs, Chenghose's role has been focused on conflict resolution and arbitration, especially involving land disputes. According to the members of two COs, the patwari or the government official who maintains land records and collects revenue is very corrupt and will often over-charge people or not share their records with them. Chenghose helps facilitates those transactions with them. They also have a peace committee that resolves other disputes related to development. Social or personal matters continue to be handled by the Jirgah, which is the major forum for arbitration on the Union Council Level. Since 2002, CWS has re-started its development activities.

5.2.1 Infrastructure Development

The infrastructure development of CWS has been small-scale. They have paved one street and built a smaller village track. The majority of the projects involve drinking water and water conservation projects, including 14 hand pumps, a well, and a small water dam.

5.2.2 Human Resource Development

A skill-based training has been one of the strongest areas of CWS. In fact, they have trained several of their volunteers to perform social mobilization outreach and participatory rural appraisal and begun to out-source them. Other trainings have included driving, agriculture development and various forms of vocational training. According to CWS' preliminary investigation, the trainings have successfully raised the annual income of the residents. Based on CWS's records, on average the income of nine people who received training from electricians and carpenters has gone up by 85 percent.

5.2.3 Education

Education is the key focus of CWS. They manage 38 literacy centers funded by the National Commission of Human Development (NCHD), a quasi non-governmental organization. Each center provides education services to adults, including mathematics, reading and writing in Urdu. Approximately 100 people pass through one center per year. According to Chenghose, NCHD's former chairman is from Latamber, which may explain how the program was conceived.

5.2.4 Microcredit and Savings

Microcredit has not been a major focus of the organization. Internal lending at present is taking place at the level of the community organization. For example, the women's organization in Wasti Latamber disbursed Rs. 175,000 to its members for various vocational trainings. One woman has opened a clothing shop; other women have used the loan to pay for sewing classes. While these courses have not increased the income of the women, they are helping them decrease their expenses.

5.2.5 Natural Resource and Agriculture

The land in Latamber has a high level of salination and there is no ground water. The Swiss Development Corporation through the International Corporation (IC) has provided funds to grow kana, a crop that produces a weaving material that can be used for producing baskets and string. CWS first convinced the villagers to donate part of their land to plant this crop. In some cases, they were even able to convince the local jirgah to donate common land. Allocation of common land for CWS projects suggests that the organization has been able to win the community's buy-in.

5.2.6 Other Social Services

Before SRSP and other donors invested in the region, CWS had to rely on local charity and philanthropy. Many of those projects continue. For example, in coordination with Al-Shifa a local hospital, CWS has established an eye-camp to provide eye-care to the village. This activity was facilitated by funds donated by philanthropists or collected by the organization. Every month, the organization's volunteers provide transportation to take individuals to the hospital, and pay for the most vulnerable patients. The lab fees for all patients referred by Chenhoose are waived. They also continue other charitable works that include supporting widows and paying for the education of children whose families cannot afford tuition. Finally, in partnership with a Peshawar-based NGO, they are assisting with voter registration.

5.3 Key Achievements

Individuals from Chenghose Welfare Society persisted with their vision of community mobilization in spite of terrible opposition. In the process, they have 1) won over their critics; 2) promoted community philanthropy; 3) partnered with external agencies including the government and donors; and 4) developed resource persons who have helped create village development plans.

According to the women of Wasti Latamber, a member organization, CWS has successfully shut the mouth of the mullahs. During an interview session, a cleric who had vigorously opposed CWS was now a supporter.

In addition, even when there were no external sources of funding, CWS through personal relationships and contact, continued providing them social services. They also instilled this sense of philanthropy in their member organizations. Before the LSO was created,

the people did not automatically sit together to discuss their problems; people were pretty private. Now, according to the women of Wasti Latamber, when one of the community members receives training, they hold sessions for others in the communities. After the creation of the LSO, according to the women, their men have also become more interested in community development and supporting the women's organization.

CWS has successfully partnered with NCHD and the SDC program. At present, they are on a fund-raising drive, and have sent out 34 letters of inquiry to various donor agencies. Finally, through trainings provided by NCHD, SRSP, and other agencies, CWS has started to outsource people to various agencies; e.g. to conduct rapid appraisals. These resource people have also helped CWS create village development plans for the 21 villages of Latamber.

5.4 Lessons Learnt

Leadership is very important. As members readily admit, the organization would not have survived without Farakh Dil. However, it is also important to invest in a group of second generation leaders. Farakh Dil is ready to retire, but he is concerned that there is no one who can take over for him.

It is important to promote networking within COs. The community members of Wasti Latamber were able to capitalize on their skills development by conducting this training for other women in the community. More women were able to benefit from these skills-based activities because they became more accessible.

Karak is one of the most conservative areas, but their women's organizations are very active in part because the creation of women's groups takes place through the male members, which may restrict mobilization in the long-run, but at present it is creating a window of opportunity. According to CWS, often they send out male mobilizers who sensitize the men to the concept of social mobilization who in turn talk to the women of the community.

Unlike most LSOs, CWS engages in advocacy campaigns, for example a campaign against drug use. These campaigns allow them to network within members of the community and often serve as a catalyst for community development. While there is some danger that these campaigns may polarize the community, in the case of CWS they have helped mould a sense of community identity and a unified voice.

6. Analysis of LSO Progress

The responsibilities of the LSO by which to measure the development of the LSO are listed in Annex I. Broadly, the major function of the LSO is to: 1) support social mobilization efforts at the community and UC level; 2) provide opportunities to communities to mitigate poverty through micro credit or skills-based opportunities, 3)

sustain development activities by partnering with the government or other funding agencies, 4) help community organizations to develop a development plan to identify and prioritize needs, and 5) monitor the progress of community organizations.

To varying extents, all three of the cases discussed above are fulfilling this role successfully in spite of opposition from the community and a lack of funds. In all three cases, the scaling up of the community organization has led to creation of more opportunities and has strengthened social mobilization. Again, as the women from Wasti Latamber mentioned trainings and other opportunities are more accessible. Initially, they had to travel to the SRSP office in Kohat, and now they have a similar organization providing these services closer to their homes. There is also more interaction with members of individual COs. According to a community organization in Kritote, at least one member of RCDF will attend a meeting, take notes on issues, and pass them to the relevant committee member. Finally, CWS has supported advocacy programs building a community voice.

All three organizations have also leveraged local or external opportunities for their members. RCDF in particular has used its VDO structure to award opportunities. For example, the VDOs helped gather data for the development plans, and when an opportunity was presented by the livestock department, again mobilizing the VDO network, they were able to identify the people who needed the training the most. Both NRSP and SRSP have a critical role to play in facilitating these linkages. Kiran is the only organization that was able to attract significant funds from the RSP network, and that was largely due to NRSP's contacts with PPAF. SRSP also provided CWS with a list of donors, to whom CWS is in the process of writing. In the first three to four years of development, the RSPs have an important role in creating links with these external agencies.

All three organizations have also partnered with local government. According to Kiran, local government had made minimal investments in Palundari, but the dynamism of the organization and the presence of the CO network inspired the government to invest in the UC. In the case of RCDF, having village development plans in place attracted government agencies, e.g. PCRWR. The presence of key resource people to compile these is critical.

There are monitoring mechanisms in place, through the network of resource people, the kind that RCDF and CWS have that are trained in rapid appraisal. However, given that the current form of these networks is new, they have not had the opportunity to monitor project implementation. However, all three of the organizations continue to monitor the development of individual COs and their mobilization efforts. For example, CWS had revoked the membership of 15 COs because they were having financial problems. All LSOs are engaged in the daily affairs of the COs and their leaders. Over time, monitoring frameworks for projects can be introduced by the RSPs.

7. Impact of Formalizing the LSO

As discussed above, while the establishment of the LSO was demand-driven for many of the organizations, in 2005 RSPN formally announced a national strategy where incentives were provided for the organizations to formally register, develop by-laws, and development plans.

To date, the impact of formalizing the LSO has been positive. In the case of CWS, the formalization of the LSO has created a more discernable structure for the organization. That is, before the LSO was created, CWS was carrying out ad hoc charitable activities. Now, with a system of COs sub-divided by cluster they have a better sense of local need. Further, they are able to plan to address longer-term development challenges.

The formalization of the LSO has also improved credibility for the organization with donors. In the case of Kiran, their work with NRSP gained the attention of PPAF, however, they needed to formalize a management and development plan to prove themselves a credible partner. The formalization of Kiran also helped improve credibility with the local community. First, registration provides a level of accountability and a sense of permanent that in term inspires community participation and awareness.

8. Conclusion: Lessons to be transferred to other LSOs:

Leadership/Institutional Strengthening

According to theorists, the presence of a dynamic leader is critical to ensuring the success of a young organization. Donors and RSPs need to work with the leaders of the organization to ensure continuity in the leadership. In the 5-7 year period, many leaders can also feel burnt out by their responsibilities, so it is important to cultivate a second or middle tier of resource people who can support the leader in the medium to long-run and also ensure accountability. Devolving authority to relevant committees can help ensure that the second generation is given adequate responsibility. Specific recommendations are below:

- In the initial stages of the development, the first five years of an organization, it is critical to have continuity in the leadership;
- In the 5-7 year period, it is necessary to cultivate a new generation of leaders to ensure institutional development;
- It is necessary to appoint resource people and activists to oversee a particular geographic cluster and coordinate activities with the LSO;
- The LSO should focus on developing the sectoral skills of their resource people;
- Over time devolve sectoral management to committees;

Mobilization

In terms of mobilization it is very important to strengthen informal links within COs, VDOs, and LSOs so the community can learn from each other. VDOs are essential for reaching out to COs, which are necessary to maintain links with individual members. In Karak, social mobilization was extremely successful and illustrated increasing returns because community members were in the habit of imparting their trainings to other community members. Further impediments to reaching out to women can be overcome by involving the male community members. Over time, RSPs will have to ensure that this policy does not lead to nepotism, but in the short run it is effective in providing access to women. Finally, in the initial stages of the organization's development, it is critical for the LSOs to get to know the activities of their organizations intimately, so that the network is tightly knit. Specific recommendations are below:

- COs that receive trainings should be encouraged to connect with others to transfer their new skills;
- It is necessary to engage male community organizations when reaching out to women;
- It is necessary for LSOs, particularly committee members, to be initially engaged in CO meetings to consolidate the network. Over time, the VDOs can carry out this role.

Promoting Linkages

A few key policies can help promote linkages between the organization and external agencies such as donors and other NGOs. Have an annual budget and corresponding development plan will incite donors to invest in the company as it will illustrate a degree of organizational sophistication, and allow donors to match their interests to the organizations abilities. Further, development of promotional material, e.g. a one-pager on program activities will also help to develop local links.

Improving overall organizational monitoring will attract external sources; as accountability is a key concern of the donors. The role of the VDO can be developed to support program monitoring.

- Having a village development plan in place will help attract donors as it is easier to match needs with project;
- Role of the VDO needs to be defined to support monitoring;
- Local advocacy campaigns can help attract external sources;
- Writing up a one page history, activities, and achievements of the projects is helpful in attracting external funds

Annex I: Responsibilities of the LSO²⁵

- Form new men and women COs
- Strengthen member COs and VDOs through capacity building programmes on need basis.
- Identify opportunities and make area specific development plans and implement them in collaboration with member organisations.
- Form development partnership with local government at UC level.
- Establish development linkages with government, NGOs and private sector agencies for accessing services and resources to its member organisations as well as for its own operations and programmes.
- Mobilise human, financial, and other resources for its member organisations.
- Take whole sale credit from RSP and other financial institutions and retail it to its member VDOs and COs on a mutually agreed service charge. Keep proper record of its credit operations and do timely and accurate reporting to its member organisations, the support organisation and other stakeholders.
- Regular monitoring of programmes and projects of its member VDOs and COs.
- Represent its member organisations on various forums, networks and associations.
- Plan, implement and manage union council level or intra VDO projects and programmes
- Timely and accurate progress reporting of programmes and projects to member organisations, donors and other stakeholders.
- Generate and manage funds for its operational cost through various sources

²⁵ Azizi, Mohammad Ali. 2006. Guidelines for LSO Programme. Rural Support Programme Network.