



LSO Initiatives

# LSO Rural Community Development Organisation

## What are LSOs?

LSOs or Local Support Organisations are central to the 'Social Mobilisation' approach of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs). In a bid to reduce poverty and empower marginalised people (especially women), the RSPs mobilise rural communities into a three-tiered structure, which consists of Community Organisations (COs) - neighbourhood level community groups, Village Organisations (VOs) - village level federations of COs, and LSOs - union council level federations of VOs. LSOs are able to carry out community-led development at a much greater level due to the advantage they gain from numbers. As the tertiary tier, LSOs are also uniquely able to develop linkages with government and non-government organisations, donors agencies and the private sector.

## The LSO

District: Bagh, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK)  
Union Council: Topi  
Total Households in Union Council: 3,500  
Organised Households: 2,452  
Coverage: 70%  
Number of Village Organisations (VOs): 14 mixed VOs  
Number of Community Organisations (COs): 119 (52 men's COs, 45 women's COs and 22 mix COs)  
Number of General Body Members: 103 (75 men and 28 women)  
Number of Executive Body Members: 22 (13 men and 9 women)

## The Initiatives

### STIPENDS FOR THE POOREST

The LSO organised for 338 people to get monthly stipends from the Zakat Committee<sup>1</sup> of Rs. 1,000 each.

<sup>1</sup> Zakat is an obligatory payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes. The Zakat Committee is a Government committee which manages and decides how collected Zakat should be spent.

The people identified by the LSO were all either widows or orphans.

### FOREST PLANTATION AND PROTECTION

The LSO has invested its time and energy into ensuring that its surroundings maintain its beautiful forests. In this regard, the LSO has contacted the Forestry Department and obtained over 370,000 plants. In addition to this, the LSO has created Forest Protection Committees in each of its villages, in order to stop people from illegal logging and to quell forest fires.

### GIRLS' COLLEGE AND VOCATIONAL CENTRE

Through the local government, the LSO has managed to get a Girls College and Vocational centre approved. The approval was granted in 2010 and at the moment, the buildings are under construction (See Picture Above).

### AWARENESS REGARDING DRUGS

The LSO, being aware of the dangers of drugs and the risk that they poses to its youth, organised an awareness session regarding the danger of drugs. The LSO contacted the District Health Officer (DHO)-Poonch, a doctor and a professor to deliver the session.

The LSO has formed a conflict resolution committee, which consists of eight Executive Body Members and 25 General Body members. The committee deals with local disputes so that they do not have to go to the local courts. Only in extreme cases, when the committee is not able to resolve an issue, do the courts step in. So far the committee has solved a total of 113 cases, including one murder case, 55 land dispute cases, 13 kidnapping cases, 15 robbery cases and 29 fights. In any particular case, the committee nominates three members to go and investigate the case in detail and to report back their findings. The committee then gives its judgement. Those who do not abide by the judgement are socially boycotted by the entire union council, so as to ensure that the guilty party is conceded to the punishment.

#### **BUILDING OF MADRASSAHS IN EVERY VILLAGE**

The LSO, through local donations, has set out and installed a madrassah in each and every village. The purpose of this is to ensure young children have a place to learn how to read the Quran, while at the same time providing elderly women with Quran-reading lessons in the evening. In some cases, a madrassah was already present but in a bad condition, while some villages did not have a madrassah at all. In addition to one-off donations, the wealthy households in the villages have been asked to make monthly donations to their madrassah, an example being of one wealthy household providing Rs. 3,000 per month.

**A Madrassah that the LSO has renovated**



#### **RAINWATER HARVESTING**

The LSO, through its linkages development, is taking part in a project being implemented by the Maqsood Welfare Society. The project aims to combat some of the problems regarding access to clean water (a common problem in mountainous areas) by harvesting rainwater. The pilot project will be implemented throughout the union council and is scheduled to start in the coming month.



**A hillside the LSO is working on currently for plantation**

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