



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.

LSO Initiatives

LSO Saleem Khan

Date of Formation:	29 May, 2009
District:	Swabi
Union Council:	Saleem Khan
Total Households in Union Council:	1,722
Organised Households:	1,222
Coverage:	71%
No of Village Organisations (VOs):	2 (all mixed)
No of Community Organisations (COs):	68 (all men's)
No of General Body Members:	42 (all men)
No of Executive Committee Members:	12 (all men)

RE-CLAIMING ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED LINK ROADS

Communication has become a key determinant of development and welfare in the modern world. Link roads play vital roles in communication of rural areas. There were three link roads in the main town of Union Council Saleem Khan, Swabi. These link roads were 22 feet wide, and 1,500, 1,700 and 2,000 feet long respectively. The first road was constructed for the Higher Secondary School (Boys) and the other two were access roads for two villages with 1,200 households. But these roads were illegally occupied by people and merged in to their irrigated fields. Due to which, students of the school and residents of the villages had to travel longer distances on foot. The villagers had problems in accessing the main road, markets, schools, health centers etc. The occupants of these roads were influential families, therefore even the local Jirga was unable to act against them.

The LSO leaders discussed the matter among themselves and considering the complexity of the issue decided to tackle it tactfully. With the help of



A link road re-claimed by the LSO

the local *Patwari*, they first identified and demarcated the road sites. They then asked for a meeting of the local *Jirga*, handed over the revenue records of the occupied access roads and asked the *Jirga* to take action in their own way. Emboldened by the support of LSO leaders, the local *Jirga* called the respective land occupiers and made them vacate the occupied portions immediately. The LSO quickly constructed shingle roads on them on self-help basis. The cumulative cost of the three projects was around Rs.300,000.

LAND CONSOLIDATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ACCESS ROADS FOR COMMON LAND OF THE AREA

The UC has common land of around 8,000 *Kanals*. There were two main obstacles in the proper management of this valuable land. First, there was no access road to the land. Therefore, transportation of inputs to and agri-products from the land was extremely cumbersome and expensive. Second, the land rights of each household were divided into a number of smaller pieces, due to that the labour and other management cost was quite high and disputes over land boundaries were numerous. The only solution to this matter was re-distribution of the land by consolidating dispersed pieces in to single larger pieces. But this was an extremely sensitive issue, because different pieces of land had different values in terms of fertility, water rights and distance from the road. However, the LSO leaders convinced the people about the benefits of land consolidation for the majority of the owners. With the help of the local *Jirga*, the LSO leaders arranged consolidation and re-distribution of the land amongst its owners. As a result of that, each household received one large piece of land in the commons. This helped them bring down their cost of farming and land management substantially. Moreover, it will reduce land disputes in future resulting in further savings from unnecessary litigations.

Moreover, the LSO managed to construct 8 access roads to the new land costing Rs. 4.3 million. The money was arranged by the local *Jirga* from different sources. This has not only reduced their transportation cost but also increased the net value of the land significantly.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION LOCALLY

There are 7 stone crushing plants in the nearby mountains. After formation of the LSO, they realised

that they can generate substantial revenue by charging a modest amount of toll tax on the vehicles that use their link roads to transport crushing material from the plants. The LSO took charge of all access roads to the crushing plants and transparently auctioned toll tax on each one of them at Rs. 516,000 annually. Since the local *Jirga* is traditionally the custodian of all common resources, they decided to keep the toll tax income in the bank account of the *Jirga*. However, the *Jirga* can use the money only at the recommendation of the LSO.

CONSTRUCTION OF STADIUM FOR SPORTS

The LSO realised that there were no sports facilities for the youngsters of the area. The LSO formed a Sports Committee to address the issue. The Committee recommended construction of a stadium in the center of the town and identified 26 *Kanals* of land for it. The LSO leaders and the local *Jirga* negotiated with the owners of the land, and motivated them to swap their land in the main town with equal amount of land in their commons. Although the price of land in the town was 100% higher than the land in commons, they successfully negotiated deals with each and every landowner.

After occupying the 26 *Kanals* of land, the LSO approached the Provincial Director Sports for funding. The Director Sports constructed a 6 feet high boundary wall. The boundary wall costs Rs. 5 million and it was constructed by a government contractor. The LSO organises cricket, hockey and volleyball tournaments in the ground. They receive donations and advertisement fees from local shopkeepers to buy trophies, while tea to the players and organisers is served by 10 community member households in turn on a daily basis.

SQUASH COMPLEX FOR WOMEN

On the request of the LSO, the Provincial Director Sports approved a Squash Complex for women, which is under construction. This project is also being executed by a government contractor. The squash complex will cost Rs. 7.5 million of public funds. This will be a landmark project in the history of the country.

PROVISION OF EDUCATION FACILITIES

While planning for education development, the LSO realised the need for a high school in the UC for girls and a higher secondary school for boys. Due to lack of these educational facilities, most girls were unable to continue their studies after class 8 and most boys used to stop their studies at Matriculate level. This was a long-felt issue but despite several efforts in the past, the community was unable to convince the concerned government authorities to resolve their problem. However, after formation of the LSO, their social capital and hence power has significantly been improved. Therefore, when they approached their local MPA from the platform of the LSO, he provided them with one girls' and one boys' high school and upgraded the old boys' high school into Higher Secondary school within a short time.



The Stone Crushing Plants