

## **REPORT /// RSPs ANNUAL STRATEGY RETREAT 2012**

6-7 March 2012, Bhurban



**ORGANISED BY THE RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES NETWORK**



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## **EVENT SUMMARY**

The Rural Support Programmes (RSPs), collectively the largest development network in Pakistan, gathered to share their experiences and discuss ways forward at their annual strategy retreat. As the apex body of the RSPs, the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) organized the two-day event. In addition to over 100 representatives from the RSPs, the retreat also featured representatives from international and national development organisations, such as OXFAM, BRAC, PPAF and the Imran Khan Foundation (IKF).

The issues that came under discussion notably included the incorporation of right-based approaches to the RSP's existing institution building activities, strengthening the capacity of grassroots organisations and linking them to the public sector, and eradicating polio from Pakistan.

The theme of gender also received particular focus, with representatives from the RSPs and RSP-fostered community organisations emphasising gender mainstreaming and the role of gender in enabling community-driven rural development. The retreat featured the distribution of certificates to the successful graduates of the Gender Training of Trainers (GTOT) programme run by RSPN.

The event closed out with closing remarks from Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman RSPN and Mr Qazi Azmat Isa, CEO PPAF, who together emphasised fostering 'institutions of the people' for sustainable rural development to happen.

The RSPs seek to work with poor rural communities for their uplift. Today, the RSP network works with 30 million poor people in 110 districts and FATA areas of Pakistan. This partnership with rural Pakistanis has shown Pakistan that our people have the potential and the will to change, to create a tolerant and stable country for the future. The RSPs will continue to work with more people across the country, to build resilient communities.

## **OPENING REMARKS**

The opening remarks were carried by CEO RSPN, Ms Shandana Khan, who after noting the return of Chairman RSPN, Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan to Pakistan, spoke of the joining of FIDA into the Rural Support Programmes Network. Working primarily in Dera Ismail Khan and Tank in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and South Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, FIDA promises to extend the RSPs' outreach and approach into the still relatively poorly accessed FATA.

Ms Shandana highlighted the rising numbers – particularly under NRSP – and impact of LSOs, and anticipated that the LSOs would feature centrally in the ensuing discussions of the event. LSOs have featured as an important answer to the challenge of scale and in linking community action with donor and government institutions and funding.

She also spoke of the post-DFID sustainability of RSPN, specifically highlighting the importance of RSPN in leading cross-RSP programmes such as the Gender Training of Trainers (GTotT) and the possibility of reviving the recently concluded Women Leadership Programme (WLP). One significant contribution of the RSPN she identified was in soliciting from international donors and the government alike flood relief and recovery projects and coordinating them for local implementation through the relevant local RSP.

Following Ms Shandana's comments, COO RSPN Mr Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay briefly outlined the growth and progress of the RSPs' outreach across Pakistan over the past 30 years.

These comments acted as the tacit background for the ensuing sessions.

## **GENDER AND HEALTH**

One of the central themes during the events was gender and development. On chief interest was the idea of reconciling and incorporating the rights-based approach into the current approach of the RSPs in dealing with gender. Ms Salma Khan, Programme Manager GAD NRSP, gave an introductory session on the rights-based approach, outlining the concepts and practice underlying the approach. Ms Salma particularly noted that the rights-based approach enlarged the choices available to women.

Presentations from LSO RDSO, District Mansehra – SRSP, by Mr. Munir Qureshi (Chairman) and from LSO Veragi, District Bahawalpur – NRSP, by Ms. Quratil Ain (President) offered local perspectives on the possibilities of this approach.

Affirming the LSO presentations, Mr Khalid Khan, DCoP RSPN-ASP emphasised the need for LSOs as they offered a framework upon which macro-level action can be coordinated to influence and develop policy.

Ms Shandana Khan highlighted the possibility of the LSOs in the same light, given they act as very suitable linking institutions with the government. She also however highlighted the need for a more coherent mediation between the LSOs on issues such as gender and the rights-based approach, noting specifically the need to have a conference of LSO managers, something she said is still being undertaken by AKRSP and which she said should be streamlined across the remaining fraternity of RSPs.

Chairman RSPN, Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan however placed some perspective within the conversation, by emphasising the need to understanding the sequencing necessarily tied to accepting a rights-based approach: firstly, institution-building was in order, of creating and maintaining COs, VOs and LSOs, followed by the introduction of approaches such as the rights-based one. He made this specific point for the reason that such approaches are only possible once

community institutions are sufficiently matured and linked with government and donor organisations.

The role of LSOs using their primary institutional building approach was then highlighted through a series of presentations on women's Local Support Organisations in Pakistan. These were made by Ms. Bilqis, Chairperson LSO Mehran, District Shikarpur – SRSO, Ms. Musarat Bibi, Finance Secretary, LSO RBCSO, District Balakot – SRSP, and Ms. Sughaira Amam, Finance Secretary, LSO QRSDP, District DG Khan – NRSP.



Women LSO presentations underway

Ms Murarat Bibi particularly emphasised how the creation of their women LSO offered them a social strategic platform that enabled them to overcome the resistance of men in the union council in proceeding with women-specific development activities. She said that women now live publically and privately in more inclusive settings. Also notable was Mr Ghulam Zehra, who spoke of her community is now more physically secure, with people of different caste coming together under the unifying platform of the LSO, fostered for them by the UCBPRP run by SRSO, to install physical security against bandits and other criminal activity. She also spoke of how the LSO has offered them greater parity and therefore better bargaining stakes with their local feudal lords, who had previously

impacted their lives adversely on an individual basis without fear of any counter-response.

Continuing with incorporating and understanding alternative approaches in gender and development, the event featured a presentation and discussion on OXFAM's We Can campaign, which is making violence against women a public concern. It is undoing the shame and stigma attached to talking about it and triggering a desire among ordinary people to change social attitudes that support inequality and violence against women. The presenter, Ms. Syeda Hajera Pasha, National Coordinator 'WE CAN' Campaign, Oxfam-Pakistan, emphasised the overlaps with the RSPs in the work to strengthen local structures, and offered this as a definite opportunity to collaborate. CEO SRSP, Mr Masud ul Mulk raised the issue of to what extent OXFAM's approach could be incorporated by the RSPs but hoped it was possible considering both acted locally as change agents. Mr Masud ul Mulk also raised the issue of the RSPs efficacy as change agents was possible if the supplemented their advantage of scale with depth. Mr Shoab Sultan Khan acknowledged OXFAM's history of contributions at critical times, noting the one first such being the £30,000 it gave to AKRSP in the 1980s.

The session on gender included the distribution of certificates to the successful graduates of the Gender Training of Trainers (GToT) programme run by RSPN.

Maternal healthcare feature significantly in discussions concerning the place of women in society and family. RSPN's Social Sector arranged presentations on its USAID funded, Population Council collaborated FALAH Project, and on its UNICEF funded polio eradication work. Both of these centrally rely on how women are able to negotiate these health approaches within their immediate contexts. The discussions on FALAH elaborated the utility of establishing behaviour change and health services, through community healthcare workers, aiming to improve maternal and child health, and reduce associated mortality rates, by promoting



Certificate for Gender Training of Trainers (GTot) being given to a successful candidate by CEO RSPN, Ms Shandana Khan

WHO-recommended timing and spacing of pregnancies. Tasked with uniquely underserved areas, RSP trained Community Based Volunteers (CBVs) sought behaviour change through the sensitisation of husbands and Married Women of Reproductive Ages (MWRAs) in birth spacing practices and services and also constituted a referral and follow-up system to birth spacing and pregnancy services provided by designated healthcare providers.

Bringing forth the experience in behaviour change through community awareness, Mr Bashir Anjum, Social Sector Specialist RSPN presented on the recent achievements of the RSPN-UNICEF partnered pioneer campaign of awareness raising in high risk districts of Karachi on ongoing polio vaccination drives by UNICEF, RSPN expanded its activities with UNICEF over a longer duration and to a greater number of districts across polio vulnerable Sindh. This occurred over two phases. During the initial phase, RSPN conducted awareness raising campaigns in a further 87 union councils. The campaigns reached a total of 939,112 households, representing a target population of 449.989 children of up to 5 years

of age. These community awareness raising efforts successfully reduced possible vaccination refusals: for example, during the polio service delivery campaign of December 2011, RSPN's social mobilization teams addressed 1,573 out of 1,808 refusals at the spot. The following phase saw RSPN raising community awareness on polio in 13 high risk districts of Sindh. These 13 districts include 46 talukas, which consist of 93 Union Council. The estimated population affected by this campaign was 3.45 million people, covering 593,946 households. The awareness outreach of campaign was 586,587 children under the age of five.

## **GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT**

The LSOs feature centrally in the emerging framework for grassroots development being applied by the RSPs. Not incidentally, therefore, the LSOs have featured strongly in the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and RSPN implemented Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP), which using USAID funding supports civil society organizations by providing grants for social and economic development at the grassroots level. The event focused on this specific aspect, with an overview presentation given by Mr. Mazhar Iqbal, Deputy Chief of Party SGAFP and a case study presentation given by Mr. Khalid Bacha, Chairman LSO Seven Star, District Swabi – NRSP.

COO RSPN, Mr Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay acknowledged the help NRSP provided LSO Seven Star to getting project while Mr Agha Javad, GM NRSP, stated that such kind of support was characteristic of the advisory experience of the RSPs helping LSOs through its regional engineers and staff.



Mr Khalid Khan speaking on building capacities of LSOs

Questions were also raised concerning VOs, whether they could constitute as valid applicants to the programme's funding. This question was of particular concern to SRSO and other RSPs that have lower counts of LSOs and are therefore excluded from participation in such programmes. Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan noted that the LSOs remain the most suited community platform for such projects, given not only the tough competition but the need for capacity and work on scale, which often are satisfied within the form of the LSO alone. He further noted that the lower tier community platforms, such as the VOs, can still benefit from the work given to the LSOs, as they are indispensably constituent parts of the LSOs. Following on the issue of capacity, Mr Khalid Khan noted that RSPN-ASP is assisting in the building the capacity of LSOs for the programme and that even now, their acceptance rate for project funding within the programme is comparatively higher to other kinds of organisations not fostered by the RSPs.

## **LESSONS FROM ALTERNATIVE ORGANISATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Beyond discussing alternative approaches offered under women rights and the change agency of OXFAM, the event place special emphasis in soliciting experiences and lessons learnt from other organisations. For this reason, the RSPs invited three organisations, BRAC, the Imran Khan Foundation (IKF) and the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

Country Representative from BRAC-Pakistan Mr. Muhammed Faridur Rahman gave an account of BRAC's origins, expansion from an NGO to an INGO. Mr Shoaib Sultan Khan said he saw promise in this account, given the RSPs can also trace their leadership and initial moorings in the geographical background of BRAC. Mr Masud ul Mulk, SRSP CEO, emphasised the need to learn from how BRAC has been able to handle the difficult politics in its country, and managing to therefore stay away from politics, something he asserted was crucial to the future growth of the RSPs themselves.

This round of discussions was followed by a presentation by Mr. Naseem ur Rehman, CEO IKF, who introduced his organisation, the leadership vision of Imran Khan himself and emphasise the current relationship IKF already had with the RSPs. It elaborated the latter point by emphasising its partnership with SRSP, with which it is working to constructing housing for affected communities.

The general issue of advocacy and practice was also raised in the midst of these two rounds of discussions, with the need to address the crisis of capacity in development and to also becoming more vigorous in the defending development work as being not a parallel system but as a compensatory intervention where the government has poor reach or penetration. Advocacy therefore was emphasised as a complementary and close relationship with the government.

This aspect of working closely with government or government fostered organisations was lead with a discussion on PPAF. CEO PPAF, Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (CEO PPAF) reflected on the working hitherto done by PPAF, its origin and debt to the RSPs, and the need to further integrate the RSPs' self-reliant and outreach-based work with the communities. He specifically called upon the possibility of a model-neutral, value-led, outcome-led approach within PPAF, which the RSPs had already been pursuing in some

form by deferring in an open-ended way to the local communities themselves. He saw this as an important approach because of he felt a shift in strategy was needed in development work, which currently relies on institutions serving the poor rather than community institutions of the poor themselves. This open-ended, community-focused approach he said would enable development work to be accepted by and therefore reach even difficult geographies and cultural contexts, where poverty is higher than the remaining country and where the government has so far been unable to create a space for itself and instil requisite change.

## APPENDIX

### Event Agenda

Time	Activity	Responsibility
<b>Monday, March 05, 2012</b>		
1500	Departure from RSPN office, Islamabad	RSPN Administration
1700	Arrival at PC Hotel Bhurban and Check-in	Hotel Administration
	Evening Free	
2000	Dinner	
<b>Tuesday, March 06, 2012</b>		
0815	Assemble at Conference Hall	RSPN Administration
0815-0845	Registration	RSPN Administration
0845-0850	Recitation from the Holy Quran	
0850-0915	Participants' Introduction	
0915-0920	Welcome Address	Ms. Shandana Khan, CEO RSPN
0920-0930	Short Presentation on RSPs' Outreach in Pakistan	Mr. Khaleel Ahmed Tetlay, COO RSPN
<b>0930-1030</b>	<b>Session: Rights Based Approach and RSPs</b>	
0930-0935	- Introduction to the Session	Ms. Salma Khalid, Programme Manager GAD NRSP
0935-0950	- Presentation by LSO RDSO, District Mansehra - SRSP	Mr. Munir Qureshi, Chairman
0950-1005	- Presentation by LSO Veragi, District Bahawalpur - NRSP	Ms. Quratil Ain, President
1005-1030	- Discussion and Comments	Dr. Sono Khangharani, CEO SRSO
1030-1100	Tea Break	
<b>1100-1130</b>	<b>Session: LSOs and Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP)</b>	
1100-1105	- Introduction to SGAFP	Mr. Mazhar Iqbal, Deputy Chief of Party SGAFP
1105-1120	- Presentation by LSO Seven Star, District Swabi - NRSP	Mr. Khalid Bacha, Chairman
1120-1130	- Discussion and Comments	Mr. Agha Ali Javad, General Manager NRSP

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>1130-1220</b>	<b>Session: OXFAM 'WE CAN' Campaign</b>	
1130-1140	- Presentation on the 'WE CAN' Campaign	Ms. Syeda Hajera Pasha, National Coordinator 'WE CAN' Campaign, Oxfam-Pakistan
1140-1200	- Showing of the 'WE CAN' Campaign Documentary	
1200-1220	- Discussion and Comments	Mr. Masood ul Mulk, CEO SRSP
<b>1220-1230</b>	<b>Gender ToT Certificates Distribution Ceremony</b>	
1230-1300	Video Documentaries	Mr. Faisal Khalil, Communication Officer RSPN
1300-1400	Lunch Break	
<b>1400-1445</b>	<b>Session: Presentation on BRAC: Origins, Expansion and Future (from NGO to INGO)</b>	
1400-1430	- Presentation	Mr. Muhammed Faridur Rahman, Country Representative, BRAC-Pakistan
1430-1445	- Discussion and Comments	Dr. Rashid Bajwa, CEO NRSP
<b>1445-1530</b>	<b>Session: Imran Khan Foundation (IKF)</b>	
1445-1515	- Presentation	Mr. Naseem ur Rehman, CEO IKF
1515-1530	- Discussion and Comments	Mr. Nadir Gul Barech, CEO BRSP
1530-1600	Tea Break	
<b>1600-1645</b>	<b>Session: Presentation by AKRSP on Youth Programme</b>	
1600-1630	- Presentation	Mr. Muhammad Malik, CEO AKRSP
1630-1645	- Discussion and Comments	Mr. Allah Rakha Asi, CEO PRSP
2000	Dinner	
<b>Wednesday, March 07, 2012</b>		
0900-0940	Presentation on the Evaluation of the USAID FALAH Project of the Population Council	Dr. Wasim Mirza, Public Health Consultant, Contech International
0940-0955	Presentation on Polio situation in Pakistan	Mr. Dennis King, Chief, Polio Eradication Unit, Unicef-

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
		Pakistan
0955-1010	Presentation on RSPN-Unicef Community Awareness Project	Mr. Bashir Anjum, Specialist Social Sector RSPN
1010-1025	Comments by WHO Representative	Dr. Elias Durry, Senior Coordinator for Polio Eradication, WHO-Pakistan
1025-1040	Discussion and Comments	Mr. Zaffar Junejo, COO TRDP
1040-1100	Tea Break	
<b>1100-1300</b>	<b>Session: Women's Local Support Organisations in Pakistan</b>	
1100-1105	- Introduction to the Session	Ms. Shandana Khan, CEO RSPN
1105-1120	- Presentation by LSO Mehran, District Shikarpur - SRSO	Ms. Bilqis, Chairperson
1120-1135	- Presentation by LSO RBCSO, District Balakot - SRSP	Ms. Musarat Bibi, Finance Secretary
1135-1150	- Presentation by LSO QRSDP, District DG Khan - NRSP	Ms. Sughaira Amam, Finance Secretary
1150-1215	- Group work on Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities on Women LSOs (table wise)	Group Members
1215-1225	- Preparation of short presentations	Group Leaders
1225-1245	- Group Presentations	Group Leaders
1245-1300	Open discussion on Issues of LSOs	Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan (Chairman RSPN), Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa (CEO PPAF) and CEOs RSPs
<b>1300-1330</b>	<b>Reflections by CEO Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF)</b>	Mr. Qazi Azmat Isa, CEO PPAF
1330-1430	Lunch Break	
<b>1430-1545</b>	<b>Chairman's Session and Closing Remarks</b>	Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman RSPN
1545-1600	Tea	
1630	Check-out and Departure for Islamabad	RSPN and Hotel Administration