



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 VO. 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 Sangam Welfare Society

District:	Abbottabad
Union Council:	Bagh
Date of formation:	24 December 2013
Total Households in Union Council:	2,500
Organised Households:	1,625
Coverage:	65%
No of Community Organisations (COs):	62 (27 women)
No of Village Organisations (VOs):	7 (3 women)
No of General Body Members:	24 (7 women)
No of Executive Committee Members:	11 (3 women)

Policy Advocacy

In the past, very few development activities have been carried out in the union council of Bagh due to a lack of awareness and demand from the local community. However, since the LSO's formation, it has been using its social capital to access resources and services from politicians and government line departments. The LSO leaders prepared a comprehensive list of development projects in consultation with their member VO and COs, in which each VO submitted their demands to the LSO.

The LSO formed a four member coordination and linkage committee and organised a public forum to raise funds from the government line departments and politicians,



where they invited district heads of PPHI, PHED, WAPDA, Education Department, ERRA, and Forest Department. The Committee members visited the Deputy Speaker National Assembly, who has been elected as a Member National Assembly from their constituency, at his residence in Abbottabad, and invited him to be the Chief Guest of the public forum. The event, which took place on 2 May, 2014 was attended by 900 community people including over 100 women. The LSO leaders briefed the guests about their organisational set up and goals and objectives. They then presented their development issues and asked the relevant line departments to resolve these issues. The Deputy Speaker National Assembly verified the authenticity of their demands from the heads of the concerned line departments present in the Public Forum and then asked them to take immediate actions to resolve them. As a result:

1. The Education Department gave approval for the up gradation of a girl's middle school to high school and a boy's high school to higher secondary school. Moreover, they approved two mosque schools for two far off villages.
2. People's Primary Health Initiative (PPHI) shifted the labour room of the Basical Health Unit (BHU) to the Medical Officer's residence and approved an ultra sound machine and laboratory for the BHU. These decisions had already been implemented by the time of writing this report.
3. The Health Department promised to upgrade the BHU into a 12 bed Rural Health Center with full facilities.
4. Public Health Engineering (PHE) approved an additional Rs. 9.452 million for the completion of a water supply project. In addition, they approved Rs. 3.5 million to repair a 30 year old water supply scheme.
5. Water and Power Development Agency (WAPDA) approved establishment of Complaint Office in the union council, two 50 KVA transformers and supply of electricity to a far off village of 600 households. They

also promised to distribute 3,000 energy saver bulbs free of cost among the local people and provision of 16 additional electric poles to upgrade the wiring system.

The Deputy Speaker thanked the LSO leaders for providing him the opportunity to meet with such a large gathering of community members and hear their development issues directly from them. He appreciated the presence of a large number of youths in the Forum and announced Rs. 100,000 from his own pocket for construction of a playground in the area. He announced Rs. 20 million for development projects in the union council and asked the LSO leaders to prepare and submit project proposals to him. These projects will be implemented by the relevant government line agencies. However, the LSO will closely monitor their implementation. The LSO had already started identification of development projects via its member VOs and COs.

Accountability of Government Line Agencies

A major issue faced by LSO Sangam was an incomplete water supply project in the union council which could provide safe drinking water to 1,500 households. This project remained incomplete due to misappropriation of funds by Public Health Engineering (PHE) officials. Despite repeated attempts of the LSO leaders to get information about the project from PHE, nobody paid them any attention.

Although the Right to Information Act was passed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2013, communities have been unable to take advantage of it due to a lack of awareness. When the Sarhad Rural Support Programme Abbottabad convened a day long workshop to provide LSOs awareness about the Act and to brief them about the procedure for applying for information from government departments, LSO Sangam's Executive Committee members present at the workshop finally received the know-how they needed.

The LSO submitted an application to PHE under the Right to Information Act 2013 asking for a copy of the project's PC 1 and details of disbursements on the project. Now that the LSO is empowered with knowledge about their right to information, the high officials of PHE have been trying to set up a reconciliation with LSO leaders. However, the LSO is determined not to resolve the case through back door channels. Using the information they have received, the LSO is planning to verify the quality of work done and pipes and other materials used in the project and file lawsuits against the culprits.