

LSO Initiatives: Sangum Development Organisation

Working towards a "Poverty Free UC"

Since the initiation of social mobilisation in the area in the year 1995 by the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), the organised communities under the able and honest leadership of their activists have been undertaking development activities on a self-help basis as well as through linkages with government and other donors. By August 2013, the organised communities of the union council (UC) had implemented several development projects worth over Rs. 30 million. In the year 2007, Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman RSPN motivated the LSO members that if they could declare their entire UC as open defecation free, then why could they not make it poverty free? The LSO accepted the challenge and are trying every effort to improve the livelihood conditions of the poorest families. As a combined result of these development activities, especially the poverty targeted projects, the socio-economic indicators of the families of UC Bhattian have significantly improved. This is evident from the improvement in the poverty status of the families residing in the UC between 2004 and 2011.



Sungam - LSO executive committee meeting

Survey year	Extremely poor	Chronically poor	Transitory poor	Transitory vulnerable	Transitory non-poor	Non poor	Total HHs
2004	33	280	452	651	87	12	1515
2008	18	256	448	664	121	11	1518
2011 BISP	2	45	NA	NA	NA	NA	1518

It is interesting to note that over a period of seven years, 31 extremely poor families and 235 chronically poor families improved their poverty status and moved upward. Today the LSO is just a few steps behind the victory point of declaring their UC a Poverty Free UC.

OPEN DEFECATION FREE UC SINCE 2007

The topography of the area is hilly and mostly covered with rain forest. The population is scattered meaning that the population density is quite low. Therefore, the environment is naturally clean and healthy. However, due to the traditional practice of open defecation, the settled parts of the area became seriously polluted. In addition to that, the scarce water sources of the area were also polluted. Therefore diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases become widespread especially in the summer months.

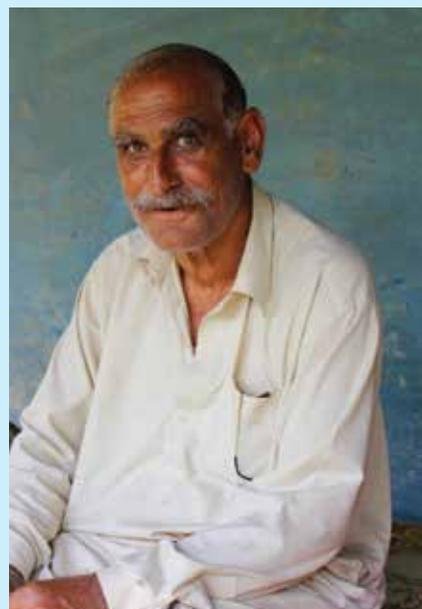
In the year 2007, RSPN initiated a pilot programme in four UCs to transform the entire UCs into Open Defecation Free (ODF) areas under its Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) project. UC Bhattian was one of the pilot sites. According to the baseline survey, out of 1,573 households, only 410 had latrines in UC Bhattian while the remaining were practicing open defecation. After receiving the initial training, 40 men and 10 women activists spread the message throughout the UC by holding sensitisation meetings, asking religious leaders to sensitise people in their sermons and Friday prayers and asking school teachers to sensitise students in schools. They managed to convince 1,163 households for construction of latrines on a self-help basis and therefore were able to declare their UC as an ODF UC. For the last six years, the UC has been able to keep its ODF status by continuous monitoring. "Apart from drastic reduction in diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases, we now enjoy a civilised culture and clean and healthy environment" says Zafar Parvez, the Chairman of the LSO.

Date of Formation:
27 March, 2008

District Rawalpindi	Union Council Bhattian, Kotli Sattian		
Total Households in Union Council 1,573	Organised Households 1,293	Coverage 82%	
No of Community Organisations (COs) 65 15 women's	No of Village Organisations (VOs) 05 all mixed	No of General Body Members 30 10 women	No of Executive Committee Members 10 3 women

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.



Sungam - President

BIOGAS PROJECT

Another landmark achievement of the LSO is the construction of 100 biogas plants for as many households of the area. Due to its hilly landscape and long and harsh winters, an average household consumes around 3,400 kg of fuel-wood annually for cooking and heating purposes. They extract fuel wood from the forest; which results in each household burning eight to nine pine trees every year. Due to heavy logging, the forest coverage is receding at an alarming rate. "We knew that we were cutting our own legs with our axes however we were helpless at the face of the ever increasing cost of alternative fuel sources" said the community people.

Moreover, cutting trees and their transportation from the forest to the houses is mainly the chore of women. Therefore, women were under immense physical stress; added to which the damage caused by inhaling the smoke and tar produced as a result of burning wood.

In the year 2012, the LSO submitted a proposal to the USAID-funded Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP) for construction of 100 biogas plants for as many households. SGAFP approved a grant of Rs. 5.48 million while the community contributed Rs. 1.5 million. The project started in February 2012 and completed in December 2012.

The project provides free biogas for four to five hours daily to each beneficiary household. They use the biogas mainly for cooking and lighting. Apart from significant savings in fuel cost, the smoke-free gas has been contributing towards a healthier environment, reduction in the workload of women and decline in logging of precious forest trees.



Sungam - Biogas Plant



Sungam - Biogas beneficiary



Sungam - Community Health Center



Sungam - Health Center

MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH CENTRE

Before 2005, there was no proper health facility in the entire UC. Due to long distances and lack of a regular transport system in place, the people had to pay a lot of money for transporting seriously sick people to Rawalpindi or Islamabad. The nearest Basic Health Unit (BHU) was at a distance of 35 km from the UC. In the cases of complications during pregnancy and delivery, the cost of hiring private vehicles for taking the women to the BHU or hospitals in Islamabad was so high that it was beyond the reach of the majority of the poor families. As a result of that, the mortality ratio of mothers and children was very high.

In the year 2005, the women members of the COs and VO's shared their plight to visiting members of NRSP's Management and requested for their support. NRSP referred their case to the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). PPAF agreed to provide the operational cost of a Health Centre in a central place of the UC. PPAF provided medical equipment and furniture, rent of the Health Centre, salaries of staff and a revolving fund of Rs. 50,000 for the purchase of medicines. The Centre became operational in October 2005. The management of the Centre was entrusted upon the LSO.

The LSO established a Health Committee comprising of seven members, five men and two women. The Committee is elected by the LSO General Body for a two year term. The Health Committee oversees the operation of the Health Centre, purchases medicines and manages its financial affairs. The patients pay Rs. 10 per visit as token money, a moderate fee on blood and other tests and the cost of the medicines. The Health Committee re-deposits the token money plus commission income on medicines into the revolving fund which has been kept in a bank account. At the moment, the revolving fund amount has increased to Rs. 1.4 million.

The PPAF support was ceased in December 2012. Since then, NRSP is providing the cost of operation of the Centre. The LSO is trying to engage other donors into the project and in this connection a series of meetings have been held with Jubilee Insurance.

The Health Centre provides vital health services such as check-up, basic blood and urine tests, minor operations, delivery facilities and medicines from patent companies in a central location to the entire population of the UC plus the surrounding villages of other UCs. In addition to that, the Centre frequently organises medical camps for distant villages. As a result, besides getting timely health services, the cost of health care has significantly reduced. Thus, the poor and marginalised families also get equal access to basic health facilities from the centre. The community reports that besides timely check-up of pregnancy cases, now maximum deliveries are carried out at the Centre resulting in a marked reduction in mother and child mortality cases.