

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

Mohammad Ali Azizi
Specialist Social Mobilisation

Umme-laila Hussain
Communications Officer

May 2014

Foreword

Local Support Organisations (LSOs) are grassroots level institutions of the people which are formed and managed by communities themselves. LSOs undertake community-led development for the benefit of their own people by working together to identify common needs within their community and collaborate with community members, donors and the government to meet those needs, on a self-help basis.

In order to conduct activities for the socio-economic development of their area, the LSO generates internal and external resources, and links the community with external resources such as donors and government funds. However, for the LSOs to successfully do this they must have an established relationship with these stakeholders, whereby those stakeholders are aware of what the LSO is and what it has accomplished in the past. Once the LSO has established itself as an organisation which is highly capable of producing results in terms of the development of their community, this can be used as a basis for mutual cooperation with other stakeholders in the future. For this reason, it is important for an LSO to ensure that the work that it is doing is communicated properly to external audiences such as the government, donors and the general public.

Sensing the increased need for LSOs to strategically consider the importance of communication in their development activities, this guideline was developed to enable LSOs to come up with ideas for generating publicity for their work. It was initially developed by the Rural Support Programmes Network, and was shared with all partner Rural Support Programmes through the social mobilisation resource team for additional input. Now that the guideline has been finalised, it can be used by LSOs and RSP Social Organisers as a resource for ensuring that the LSOs structure their development activities in such a way that involves a consideration of how their activities will be communicated to others.

Our appreciation goes to the social mobilisation resource team of the RSPs who provided valuable feedback based on their on-ground experience of working with LSOs all over Pakistan. We hope that this document will prove useful to the LSOs in their work, as proper communication with external audiences will enhance the transparency and accountability of the LSO, create a relationship of trust, support fundraising efforts, and ultimately improve the LSO's sustainability.

Muhammad Ali Azizi
Specialist Social Mobilisation
Rural Support Programmes Network

Umme-laila Hussain
Communications Officer
Rural Support Programmes Network

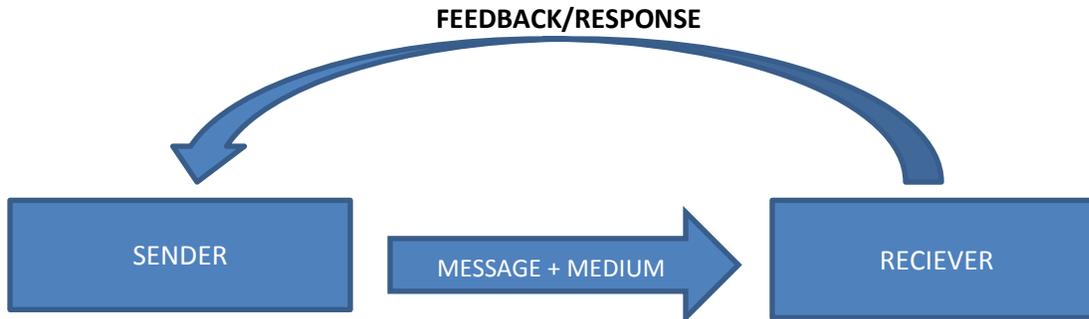
Contents

Introduction to Communication.....	1
What is Communication?	1
Why Communicate?	1
Communications Plan.....	2
Things to Consider While Developing a Communications Plan.....	2
1. Audience.....	2
2. Desired Action/Result.....	3
3. Who to Give What Message	4
4. Nature of Message/Information	4
5. Medium/Tools for Communication	4
6. Frequency and Duration of Messages.....	5
7. Photographs/Visual Aids	5
8. Resource Mobilisation.....	6
Annex 1: Sample Communications Plan.....	7
Annex 2: Outline of LSO Presentations	12
Annex 3: LSO Progress Reporting Format	15

Introduction to Communication

What is Communication?

Communication is the process of imparting or exchanging information, news and views. Communication consists of a sender, a receiver as well as a message and a medium for transmitting the message



There are various benefits of communication for LSOs. Some of these are:

- i. Audience/people are informed about the LSO's activities and accomplishments, leading to an increased confidence and trust in the LSO. This results in the promotion of the LSO.
- ii. Sharing information improves the relationship with other NGOs/government departments and other external stakeholders etc.
- iii. Communication of the LSO with the member VOs/COs will lead to greater participation and inclusiveness of members in the LSOs decisions and activities
- iv. Communication can lead to the identification of new opportunities for development projects or for obtaining funds
- v. Communication with partners and stakeholders in development projects leads to stronger coordination and ensures efficiency in time and resources
- vi. Communication also ensures clarity of roles and responsibilities

Why Communicate?

There can be several reasons why an LSO needs to communicate with others. Some of these reasons are:

- a. To inform audience about a particular event or accomplishment of the LSO
- b. To give information regarding a resource arranged or provided by the LSO for the community (e.g. the establishment of a water pump/medical facility/emergency shelter etc.)
- c. To invite people to a gathering/meeting/campaign/event of LSOs
- d. To motivate member communities and other stakeholders to adopt an action or make a decision

Communications Plan

A communication plan is a road map for getting a desired message across to a target audience. A communications plan is designed to help the LSO communicate effectively and meet core organisational objectives. Developing a communications plan will help the LSO streamline its communications needs against its development plan so that each planned activity can be communicated systematically. The communications plan will also enable the LSO to develop its institutional capacity in terms of planning and disseminating communications activities/messages, which is useful when approaching the government or donors/NGOs for partnerships or funds.

It is also important for the LSO to keep revisiting its communications plan on a regular basis in order to ensure that it is updated. For instance, if the LSO initiates a new activity during the year which was not part of its development plan, it will need to be incorporated into the communications plan as well.

Things to Consider While Developing a Communications Plan

The LSO's communications plan should closely reflect their annual development plan. The communications plan will support the development plan of the LSO, by ensuring that each planned activity is promoted adequately and/or shared with relevant stakeholders. Thus, the communications plan will contribute to the overall achievement of the LSOs mission and goals. Some key considerations for developing a communications plan are described in the following sub-sections:

1. Audience

LSOs interact with a wide range of people/groups for different purposes. Oftentimes the audience for a particular activity or message may vary, and may not include each and every stakeholder. For instance, if the LSO wishes to inform communities about the establishment of a hand pump, the audience for this message would not include school children. Therefore, for each communications message, the LSO should define the intended audience. This will ensure that the message is tailored toward the end-user and reaches them effectively. Some types of audience are:

- i. Primary Audience: Those persons who the LSO is trying to reach, i.e., for whom the message is originally intended. Primary audience can be: Donors, LSO general body/COs/VOs etc.
- ii. Secondary Audience: Those persons outside of the primary audience for whom the message might be of some use, whose knowledge may have some bearing on the LSO activities or performance

Examples of Primary Audience	Examples of Secondary Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Donors directly supporting a project• LSO general body/COs/VOs• Government departments who are supporting the LSO in its activities• Religious leaders• Youth (in related activities)• Women (in women related activities)• Merchants/business owners/tradespeople (for fundraising and relevant message)• Farmers (especially in NRM activities)• Health workers• Community resource persons• School management committees, teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media• Extended families/general masses• General donors• Government departments• Registration authority

There can be many more examples of primary and secondary audiences. The primary and secondary audiences will vary depending on the nature of the development activity as well as the message itself. In donor funded projects, the primary and secondary audience may be pre-determined in the agreement. Other types of audience can be:

- i. Internal Audience: General body of LSO, members of COs/VOs
- ii. External: Donors, Partners, RSPs, registration authorities, local opinion makers, politicians, concerned government line departments, local government, media, general masses

2. Desired Action/Result

When deciding the message and the medium, it is important to consider the desired outcome, i.e., what does the LSO want the receiver to do once they receive the message. The key action or decision which needs to be undertaken as a result of the message should be considered while developing the message to ensure that the message itself is clear and enables the receiver reach conclusions regarding what he/she needs to do.

LSO should set specific results for each communications activity and monitor the result after the message has been disseminated in order to assess the effectiveness of the message and/or the medium through which the message was transmitted. Special attention should be paid to any unwanted or unforeseen outcomes of the communication activity or its medium.

3. Who to Give What Message

Once the audiences and desired outcomes have been identified, the next task is to break down the LSOs activity or desired outcome into relevant messages for the target audience. Depending on the message and desired outcome, the LSO should focus its communication on any of the following groups, as needed:

- i. **Decision makers:** People who can use the information to make relevant decisions. E.g. community level: LSO general body/CO/VOs heads of government departments, school headmaster/headmistress and SMCs
- ii. **Action takers:** People who can use the information to take necessary or relevant actions (community groups, general masses, governments departments and local committees, partner NGOs)
- iii. **Influencers:** Those people/groups who can put pressure on the decision makers and/or action takers to resolve the situation (Media, religious leaders, political leaders and other opinions makers, general masses)

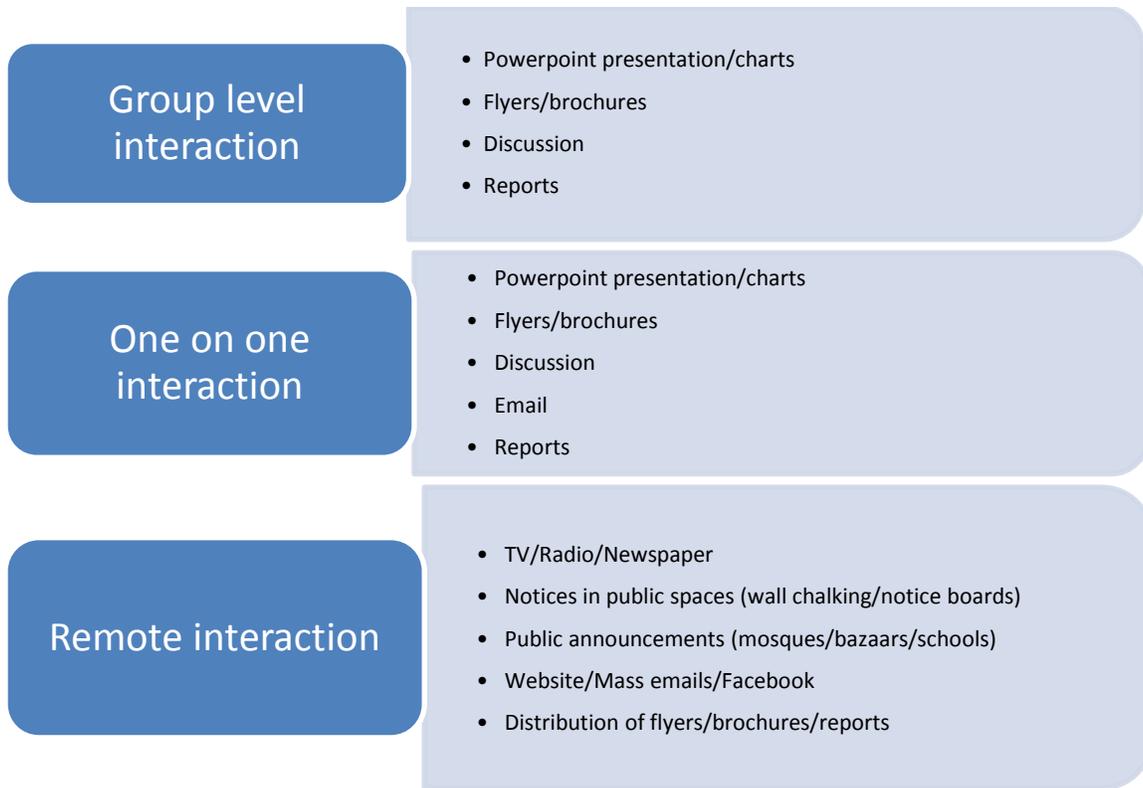
4. Nature of Message/Information

Each message should be relevant and appropriate to the audience. It is important to classify the message which the LSO is trying to give to the target audience. This will enable them to choose an appropriate medium for the message and decide the frequency of the message as well as the audience for the message. Messages can be classified into the following groups:

- i. **General:** Messages which are intended for a wide audience.
- ii. **Specific:** Messages intended for only certain groups of people and are not relevant to others
- iii. **Difficult/Sensitive:** Messages regarding community disputes/election issues/religious issues/women's rights/girls education/polio vaccinations etc which need to be given carefully in a manner that will be acceptable to the community

5. Medium/Tools for Communication

Once the audience and the nature of the message has been decided, the LSO should make a list of the most appropriate channels for communicating with them. These might include an e-bulletin, conference, workshop, leaflet, press release, event – or broader methods such as media and the internet. There are pros and cons to all of these mediums, which once again will vary depending on the LSOs needs and resources. Some examples are appropriate tools for communication in different instances are listed below:



6. Frequency and Duration of Messages

Dissemination of messages should not always be a one-time activity. Messages should be consistent at set intervals in order to constantly refresh people’s memories and keep them updated. Depending on the message, it can be bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, six-monthly or yearly. More important or urgent messages which inform the audience about a particular activity or occurrence can be repeated more frequently (once a week or multiple times in a week). Sometimes these communications are pre-determined in donor funded projects (monitoring reports, progress reports, meetings). Duration of the message refers to the total period of time over which the LSO should continue to disseminate the message, at the decided interval. For instance, a message can be given once a week (frequency), for 2 months (duration).

7. Photographs/Visual Aids

It is important for the LSO to maintain photographic documentation of its activities. Photographs are useful in a range of contexts, such as for reports, Facebook updates, presentations and well as for sharing with journalists and other external stakeholders. Photographs clearly showcase the work which the LSO is doing and are a strong tool for promoting the LSOs achievements. Good quality photographs allow stakeholders to see the LSO’s work for themselves, which serves as an important tool for establishing the credentials of the LSO.

8. Resource Mobilisation

LSO should budget a communications component in project proposals submitted to donors. If funds for communication are not provided through any donor (for a specific development project), funds can be raised through other means. This includes, but is not limited to, LSO membership fees, donations, fundraising activities, government grants, local partnerships or sponsorships etc.

Annex 1: Sample Communications Plan

Below is a sample of some activities which may be included in the development plan. When preparing the communications plan, the LSO should keep in mind two major distinctions between its communications.

- a. Organisational communications: this relates to the communication which the LSO undertakes to inform relevant stakeholders and members about LSO-related information. Examples of this are the LSOs organisational profile, by-laws, meeting minutes, meeting announcements, reports, news regarding a new committee or any kind of routine LSO activity etc.
- b. Development communications: these are communications activities which are undertaken to inform relevant stakeholders and members about activities which have been or are being conducted by the LSO, and other key accomplishments with respect to development related projects. Examples of these are newsletters, case studies, news articles, special activity reports, campaigns etc. At times these activities may already be required from the LSO as part of a donor agreement. Others may be initiatives which the LSO feels it should take. At times, development activities may be decided upon in the project agreement with donors and partners.

	Communication Activity	Main Purpose	Time/Frequency	Target Audience	Message/Information	Communication Tools	Cost	Responsibility
Organisational Activities								
1	Quarterly /Six-monthly/ Annual Report	To share progress updates.	Once in a quarter/six months/year depending on the report	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, donor	Quarterly progress update on the LSO's planned activities	Report	Printing/photocopy and postage cost. No additional cost if it is shared electronically.	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary and Treasurer
2	Progress Report for Donor (if required)	To share progress updates on project	As per agreement	LSO executive body, partner RSP, donor, general body members	Progress update on planned activity	Report	Photocopy and postage cost. No additional cost if it is shared electronically.	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

	Communication Activity	Main Purpose	Time/Frequency	Target Audience	Message/ Information	Communication Tools	Cost	Responsibility
3	Announcement for meetings	To inform members about LSO meeting	X no of days before the meeting	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, donor	Date, time and location of meeting	Notice board, e-mail, announcement, SMS message/ phone call	Cost of SMS message and phone calls if any	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
4	Meeting minutes	To share meeting proceedings and discussion/ key decisions	One time, X no of days after the meeting	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, donor	All issues that were discussed/decisions taken during the meeting	Report	Photocopy and postage cost. No additional cost if it is shared electronically.	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
5	Announcement about LSO election	To inform members about LSO election	LSO should decide time and frequency	LSO executive body and general body	Time and date of election and where it will be held	Written notice/circular to each member VO	Postage cost (if any)	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
6	News about LSO election results	To inform public about outcome of elections	One-time, X no of days after the election	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, donor, general public	Names of LSO president and other key members	Press release, public notice, circular to each member VO	Postage cost (if any)	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
7	News about development partnerships with donors or other NGOs	To give news on new projects and partnerships	One-time, after each new project/partnership	Member VOs/COs and general public	Development activity/project, donor and major benefits	Press release, news on local radio/newspaper	??	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
8	LSO Profile	Introducing the LSO	LSO should have their profile available to present whenever needed	Partner RSPs, donors/dignitaries, government departments, media, external researchers etc.	Key information regarding the LSO and its activities	Powerpoint presentation, facebook page, leaflet	No cost	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
9	Advertisement for Staff Hiring	To ensure transparent hiring of staff following a competitive	Need basis	Depends upon nature of hiring (e.g. local or regional community/ local educated youth/women-for specific projects)	Job description and specifications	Internet, facebook, newspaper, noticeboard etc	If newspaper advertisement is used then cost should be included	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary and HR committee

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

	Communication Activity	Main Purpose	Time/Frequency	Target Audience	Message/Information	Communication Tools	Cost	Responsibility
		process						
10	Sharing or Seasonal Calendar	To give information regarding timings of farm and off-farm activities	Once in a year	Local community	Complete seasonal calendar (contains information about timings of farm and off-farm activities)	Chart/Flyer	Printing or stationary cost if any	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary (they can give responsibility to someone from the LSO)
11	Newsletter	To share brief progress updates.	Once in a month or quarter (timing should be set by LSO)	Community/Donors/RSPs other external stakeholders	Progress update on the LSO's activities	Chart for display in LSO office, Flyer/brochure etc.	Printing/photocopy/stationary cost. No additional cost if it is shared electronically.	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
12	Information about Emergencies and Disasters	To educate people on safety measures and safe places	Need basis	Community	Nature of potential threat and relevant safety measures, practices, safe locations and other emergency protocols	Announcement on local mosques, SMS messages	Cost of these tools	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary, disaster committee
Development Activities								
13	Development Plan	To organize and prioritize development activities for a financial year	Once in a year	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, donor, registration authority	All activities to be undertaken and their budget	Planning report	Postage cost (if any). No additional cost if it is shared electronically.	LSO Chairperson. General Secretary and Treasurer

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

	Communication Activity	Main Purpose	Time/Frequency	Target Audience	Message/Information	Communication Tools	Cost	Responsibility
14	Special Event/Achievements	To give news about particular event or achievement	As soon as possible after the event/achievement has occurred	LSO executive body, partner RSP, donor, general body members, general public	Outline of the event/achievement	Press release, report, news in local radio	??	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
15	News about visits of dignitaries	To promote LSO objectives and activities	After visit has occurred	LSO executive body + general body members, partner RSP, general public	Description of the visit and words from the dignitary	Press release, report	None	LSO Chairperson and General Secretary
16	Fundraising campaign	To raise financial and non-financial resources for LSO	Need basis	CO/VO members, general public, LSO members, local shopkeepers, local philanthropists	Key LSO achievements. Request for donations (with reason). Type of donation. Mode of donating (i.e. who will receive the donation on behalf of LSO)	Wall-chalking, notices, announcement in mosques, informing through VOs, personal visits, etc.	Cost of the tools used	LSO Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer, selected members of LSO Executive Body, CO leaders, VO leaders
17	Informing about the Health Camp	Raising awareness for Health Camp	Need basis	CO/VO members, general public	Services, timing and location of health camp	Wall-chalking, notices, announcement in mosques, informing through VOs etc.	Cost of the tools used	LSO health committee/LSO executive body/VOs
18	School Enrolment Campaign	Raise awareness for enrolment of girls and boys in school	Need basis	CO/VO members, general public	Right to education for all children, benefits of school/education, consequences of illiteracy in the long-term	Wall-chalking, notices, announcement in mosques, informing through COs/VOs one-on-meetings with parents etc (on need basis).	Cost of the tools used	LSO Education Committee

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

	Communication Activity	Main Purpose	Time/Frequency	Target Audience	Message/Information	Communication Tools	Cost	Responsibility
19	Disaster/Emergency Support Campaign	To raise awareness and resources to help affectees	Need basis	DDMA office, rescue, ambulance services, CO/VO members, general public, LSO members, local shopkeepers, local philanthropists, health workers/organizations	Information about disaster, affectees, needs, support services and supplies required	Phone calls, SMS, announcement in mosques, etc.	Cost of the tools used	LSO Disaster Committee/ LSO Chairman and General Secretary

Annex 2: Outline of LSO Presentations

The LSO presentations should generally follow the outline given below:

1. LSO profile

- Name of LSO
- Date of formation
- Name of UC
- No. of revenue villages
- Total Households (If have done poverty scorecard exercise, then divide total number of households by poverty bands as well).
- Structure of the LSO: Number of member COs, VDOs.
- No. of General Body members and Executive Body members of LSO (gender-segregated)
- Also explain how many members are nominated from each CO into VDO and from each VDO into LSO...i.e. the process.
- Savings of COs of LSO and where has it been utilised

2. Scaling up coverage (till date)

- Household coverage (before and after LSO formation)
- Inclusion of Poorest: if have done poverty scorecard, then divide households by poverty bands (before and after LSO formation)
- Inclusion of women: shown by number of WCOs formed and women in VDO and LSO General Bodies and Executive Bodies (before and after LSO formation)
- Explain the process of increasing coverage...e.g. through CRPs, etc.

3. Activities

- Make list of LSO activities and divide into the following categories:
 - Self-help activities/initiatives
 - With local government
 - With other government departments
 - With other NGOs
 - With the private sector
 - With RSP

- Activities which were done specifically for the poorest (repetition is alright to highlight these special activities)
- Activities which were done specifically for women (repetition is alright to highlight these special activities)
- Explain all activities, making sure to mention:
 - What the activity was
 - How the activity was initiated
 - What the outcome was
 - How many households benefited from it

4. Resource Mobilisation

- Make list of resources obtained internally or through self-help and explain how they were obtained
- Make list of resources obtained externally through outside organisations, etc and explain how they were obtained

5. Accountability and Transparency

- Explain how downwards accountability in the LSO, VDO, CO has been achieved
- Explain what measures the LSO has taken to ensure transparency in the three tiers of LSO, VDO, CO

6. Challenges and their solutions

- List down the challenges which the LSO faced and how they were overcome or solved

6. Future Plans

- List down the future plans of the LSO and explain them.
- Also mention how the LSO plans on fulfilling these future plans

Note:

- At the end of the LSO presentation, there could be one or two case studies of a CO member (preferably from the poorest or a woman) mentioning details such as:
 - His/her introduction
 - Who are his/her household members

Guidelines for Developing a Communication Plan for LSOs

- Name of his/her CO
 - How he/she heard of the CO and the LSO
 - Benefits he/she received from the LSO/VDO/CO; specifically from one of the activities which the LSO mentioned in their presentation.
- The aim of these case studies is to personalise the LSO's presentation and to give the participants/readers an idea of a real-life example of how much a LSO can benefit the poorest, women, etc.

Annex 3: LSO Progress Reporting Format

Local Support Organisation: _____

Quarterly/Annual Progress Report

For the period: _____ to _____

(Fill in start month and end month for quarterly report or start year and end year for annual report)

i. LSO Profile

Profile of the LSO			
Province	District	UC	Formation date
Total HHs in UC	Organised HHs	HH Coverage (%)	
Total member COs	Men	Women	Mix
Total member VOs	Men	Women	Mix
LSO Fund: Total	Internal Sources	External Sources	

A: LSO achievements in the reporting period

Summary of Achievements (please copy the planned activities from the annual plan of the LSO and write achievements against each targeted activity in the reporting period under the respective categories)

Activity wise Achievements

Activity	Targets	Achievements	Variance
Social mobilization			
- New COs formed			
- New HHs covered			
- COs reactivated			
Self-help activities			
Externally supported activities			

B: Activity wise details of Achievements

(Please write 5-8 lines for each development activity mentioned in the previous table. Make sure to include the following for each activity:

- What the activity was?
- How was it carried out?
- Who were the implementers of the activity?
- Who were the beneficiaries of the activity?
- When was the activity carried out?
- Who was the partner (if any) in this activity?)

Name of LSO President _____ Signature _____

Name of LSO General Secretary _____ Signature _____



RSPN

Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN)

House No.7, Street 49, F-6/4 Islamabad, Pakistan.

Tel: 00-92-51-2829141,2829556,
2822476,2826792,2821736

Fax: 00-92-51-2829115

Email: Info@rspn.org.pk

Web: www.rspn.org

www.facebook.com/RSPNPakistan