

LSO Initiatives:

Marapi Local Support Organisation (MLSO)

PROVISION OF SAFE DRINKING WATER

Safe drinking water is a serious challenge for the LSO members. Due to the unavailability of safe drinking water plants, the entire population of Marapi has to drink and cook their meals with water from a polluted and unsafe water channel. Therefore, water-borne diseases are common in the area. Marapi Local Support Organisation (MLSO) approached the Local Government & Rural Development (LG&RD) department in 2010 and constructed a water filtration plant in village Ghzwapa with the financial help of UNICEF. The filtration plant supplies safe drinking water to 130 households in the village.

ARRANGEMENT OF IMPROVED QUALITY SEEDS TO FARMERS

The farmers of the area complained of the low production of their crops due to sub quality seeds and asked the LSO to arrange for improved quality seeds. The LSO contacted the Government's Agriculture Department to arrange certified and quality seeds of maize, wheat and buckwheat to its members. The LSO procures the seeds and distributes them among the interested farmers in the UC. In 2011, The LSO distributed 2,800 kilograms (kg) of improved quality wheat seed, 1,900 kg of maize seed and 1,400 kg of buckwheat seed among the farmers. As a result, the farmers are now getting more output from the crops in their fields.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE QUALITY EDUCATION

Since its establishment MLSO is working hard to improve the educational system in the union council. In this regard MLSO has conducted many meetings with the headmasters of government and private schools to discuss and decide ways and means for improving the education quality in the area. In addition to this, in 2011 MLSO hired two teachers from Middle School, Kothang and two teachers from Aliya Girls Public school, Shigar for two months to prepare the students for the annual examination 2011. The results of the both schools were better than the previous years.



Buckwheat Grinding Plant

CONSTRUCTION OF BUCKWHEAT GRINDING PLANT

Buckwheat is a plant cultivated for its triangular grains. After they have dried, they are threshed — a process where the hard, outer shell is removed so that the grains can be packaged for sale and use. Nutritionally, buckwheat is generally considered to be quite healthy. It does have a high fat content, and therefore requires special handling because it can go rancid. Beekeepers use buckwheat to produce honey because it flowers well into the summer and produces a large volume of rich, flavourful nectar. This arrangement is mutually beneficial to the beekeeper and the farmer, because the plant requires pollinators to reproduce. So due to its multiple purposes, buckwheat cultivation is quite productive for the farmers. However its production is in decline because the farmers are not getting proper prices for its flour from the market, due to a lack of proper grinding plants in the area. MLSO, in close collaboration with the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) is working on a buckwheat grinding plant in the union council. The construction work of the grinding plant is in progress. After the installation of the machine, the production of buckwheat crop is bound to increase.

Date of Formation:
15 November, 2008

District
Baltistan

Union Council
Marapi

Total Households
in Union Council

645

Organised
Households

623

Coverage

97%

No of Community
Organisations (COs)

26

13 men's COs,
12 women's COs

No of General
Body Members

52

26 men and
26 women

No of Executive
Committee Members

14

12 men and
2 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.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE ACTIVITIES IN COLLABORATION WITH THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MLSO managed several health related functions in the union council in collaboration with the Government's Medical Officer (MO), Shigar. For example MLSO distributed 350 hygiene kits among school children with the help of UNICEF (with whom they were linked through the support of the Government's MO) to control diseases especially diarrhea. MLSO also launched an awareness campaign to free the union council from plastic bags. The LSO gave training to six girls and six boys for this purpose, who went door to door and told the people to keep their village clean by disposing plastic bags properly. They also motivated them to use cloth bags instead of the plastic bags for purchase of goods from the market.



Distribution of Health and Hygiene bags among School Children

PLANTATION CAMPAIGN

MLSO launched a plantation campaign and planted 46,000 plants in two phases in the union council with the help of the World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan (WWFP) and Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP). With the financial support of CKNP, the LSO has hired a guard to look after and water the plants. The guard is paid a monthly honorarium of Rs. 5,000.

CONSTRUCTION OF PROTECTIVE WORK

MLSO constructed a protective wall in two phases to control river erosion at Marapi Ranga with the help of WWF and CKNP. The river had eroded thousands of *kanals* of cultivated and forest lands in the past few years. Moreover, a beautiful lake locally called the Blind Lake was also in danger of river erosion. After the construction of the protective wall, thousands of *kanals* of pasture lands and thousands of forest trees have been saved from erosion.



Pictures of the Protective Work

HONEY BEE ENTERPRISES

MLSO developed linkages with Hashoo Foundation and asked them for honey bee boxes. Hashoo Foundation organised a training programme in September, 2011 for 50 women. The LSO selected 50 poor and deserving women from various villages in the union council; namely Marapi, Markunja and Churkah Shigar. They learned about the process of honey making, looking after honey bees, their common diseases and ways and means of protecting them from such diseases. MLSO later received 255 honey beeboxes from Hashoo Foundation and distributed them amongst the trained women.

CONTROL OVER FREE GRAZING AND CULTIVATION OF SECOND CROPS

Though the area falls into a two-crop zone, there was no tradition of growing a second crop. The main reason for this was a lack of control over free grazing of animals after harvesting the first crop. MLSO, in consultation with member COs, imposed complete ban on free grazing of animals and appointed watch men, traditionally called *Lurapa* or shepherd, in each village of the union council so that the farmers could grow the second crop. The farmers grew maize, buckwheat and millet as their second crop. According to a rough estimate, the farmers produce second crops worth Rs. 40 million each year. They are planning to grow more buckwheat in the coming years on areas where they currently grow maize and millet which will yield the farmers almost double of this amount.

PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL HABITAT OF THE BLIND LAKE

MLSO is working on the protection and development of the Blind Lake in Shigar. MLSO organised the villagers of Kothang, the nearest village to the lake, and provided them guidance and awareness about protection of this natural habitat. The lake is the habitat of fish and wild birds which were fished and hunted by visitors. Now the villagers are protecting the fish and wild birds. In the summer, hundreds of thousands of tourists come to visit the lake. The villagers have hired two people on the lake to guard the fish and the birds. The villagers provide tent and carpets on rent for visitors and also sell food and local fruits to them. MLSO is developing a project proposal on protection and development of the Blind Lake site into a proper tourist attraction so that the local people can establish tourist enterprises around it and provide employment to youngsters.



Distribution of honey bee boxes among trained women entrepreneurs



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