

LSO Initiatives: Rabita Local Support Organisation

THE INITIATIVES

As LSO leader Shah Nawaz Khan said, "These initiatives were only possible because we were organised as a group and trusted each other. At first, only one or two of us implemented the ideas and when the results were there for all to see, the remaining LSO members followed."

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

In order to improve the livestock practices and management for higher profitability, the LSO decided to reach out to the Pakistan Livestock and Dairy Development Board (LDDDB). After an initial discussion and assessment, the LSO formed their own Dairy Association and a partnership was established between LDDDB and the LSO.

When combined, the resulting initiatives created a sustainable 100% increase in dairy product profits for the LSO. The combined initiatives resulted in healthier animals that lived longer and produced over 50% more milk as well as a substantial increase in the number of healthy young cattle.

Initiatives taken included:

- **Training of a livestock specialist**
The LDDDB trained a member of the LSO to become a livestock specialist. The specialist received training and was responsible for the treatment of the livestock. The responsibilities included quarterly de-worming of the animals as well as semi-annual vaccinations. This resulted in healthier animals that enjoyed longer lives.
- **Improvement of cattle maintenance practices**
Before the initiative, the cattle were tied up throughout the day and were given water at set times. This resulted in unhappy and unhealthy animals that only produced a modest amount of milk. Through the LDDDB, the LSO learned that through simply keeping the animals open and free to wander with a constant access to water, the animals would be happier, healthier, and produce more milk. The key benefit of this initiative was a 50% increase in milk production from the cattle.
- **Artificial insemination of cattle**
Instead of buying a costly and high-maintenance bull and forcing the cattle to mate, the LSO's livestock specialist was trained in artificial insemination of the cattle. Semen of healthy bulls was provided to the LSO by the LDDDB and the specialist was trained to artificially inseminate the cattle through an injection. This resulted in a higher number of healthy young cattle produced.
- **Chilling Machine**
As a result of the initiatives, the LSO was now producing more milk than it could consume or sell at once. To overcome the problem of storage, the LSO was provided a chilling machine by the LDDDB on a cost-sharing basis. The purpose was to store the excess milk so that when a vendor measured the contents of the milk several days after production, it had the same level of protein and fat as when the milk was freshly produced.



Healthy Livestock and Chilling Machine



AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT

In order to generate ideas about how to improve the relatively low land productivity, the LSO invited the Pakistan Ministry of Agriculture to conduct an assessment of the LSO's agricultural practices. The Ministry of Agriculture concluded that the land for crop production was uneven and that the seeds planted were of low quality, which resulted in lower crop yield and higher costs for the LSO. Combined, the initiatives implemented to solve these issues (mentioned below) more than doubled LSO and individual farmer profits, an increase of over 100%.

Date of Formation:
4 June 2010

District
Haripur

Union Council
Mankaray

Total Households
in Union Council
2,847

Organised
Households
1,725

Coverage
61%

No of Community
Organisations (COs)
58
30 women's

No of Village
Organisations (VOs)
12
6 women's

No of General
Body Members
28
10 women

No of Executive
Committee
Members
13
6 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.

SEED VILLAGES

The low quality of seeds being planted by the farmers resulted in low crop yields, frequent replanting on the seeds, and high costs to maintain the plants. To improve the quality of wheat and maize seeds, the Ministry of Agriculture and the LSO together signed a Certified Seed Agreement and the Ministry provided the LSO with a limited quantity of high quality certified seeds to grow wheat and maize.

Since the quantity of seeds was limited, the farmers developed Seed Villages. Entire fields that were earlier growing the low quality seeds were now dedicated to maximizing production from the certified seeds. The seeds planted, in turn, generated even more seeds. The primary benefits from this initiative were cost savings and increase in profits. More specifically, seed production was doubled. Further, seeds that were surplus to the LSO's requirements were sold back to the Ministry of Agriculture for a profit.

LASER LAND LEVELLING

Together, the LSO and Ministry determined one of the solutions to this problem was for the fields to undergo laser land levelling, a process of smoothing the land surface from its average elevation using laser-equipped tractors and soil movers.

The laser land levelling process resulted in cost savings on water of over 50% as well as a tremendous increase in germination. After implementation by a few LSO members, others could see the benefits and also adopted the practice.

Although the cost of laser land levelling could be up to Rs 40,000 per acre, the consequent revenues and cost-savings from the process meant that within three years all costs were recovered. Subsequent profits were for the LSO to keep.



A Normal Field

A Laser-Levelled Field

OMNI BANK

Without a bank in the village of Bajeeda, the residents had to plan a day trip to Haripur, a commute that cost Rs 30, in order to pay utility bills. This was both costly and time consuming. To solve this problem, the LSO partnered with United Bank Limited Pakistan (UBL) and the Pakistani Government in June 2012 to open a branch of Omni Bank in Bajeeda.

The LSO's contribution to the initiative was an LSO member to run the branch as well as a Rs 50,000 initial deposit. For each transaction at the Bank, the government contributes Rs 10 to Omni Bank, which is split evenly between the LSO and UBL.

The result is that in an average month, the LSO receives between Rs.12,000-14,000 from government contributions. One third of this, around Rs 4000, is given to the LSO member running the bank as a salary while the remainder is retained by the LSO. In approximately six months, the LSO earned back its initial deposit of Rs 50,000 with all income from January 2013 onwards earned by the LSO as profit.

In addition to the financial benefits, the LSO members also benefit from reduced travel time and costs from having to commute to Haripur once a month to make utility bill payments or receive payments from relatives living outside the village.



Omni Bank, Bajeeda

WOMEN EMPLOYMENT

Due to increased technology and initiatives of the LSO, the required manual agriculture work was substantially reduced and female members had much spare time on their hands. The LSO decided to brainstorm ideas for how women members could utilise their time more productively. One of the members, Nazia Bibi, was found to be doing independent embroidery work at home, mostly as a hobby. The LSO and the Nazia Bibi agreed that it would be a good idea to turn her hobby into a large-scale business.

At first, Nazia Bibi trained other female LSO members on how to design and tailor women's clothes, bed sheets, and tablecloth. The demand for this embroidery turned out to be higher than expected and soon, Nazia Bibi, who was not earning any income before was earning up to Rs 10,000 a month. When orders became large, women trained by Nazia Bibi started training other women, creating a multiplier effect for women employment in the LSO.

The LSO's role in this initiative, other than assisting in generating the idea, is to help create a market for the embroidery. For example, the LSO has set up secondary schools for both boys and girls and plans to send all uniform orders to this women's initiative. According to Shah Nawaz, "The women should only need to focus on creating the product. It is the job of the LSO to bring orders for them."

Further, the LSO has provided microcredit to community members through the LSO's Community Investment Fund in order to open stores to sell raw materials to the women. This will both create further employment for LSO members and assist the women in easily purchasing the raw materials required to create their product.



Women Carrying out Embroidery Work and its Results