

Women’s Empowerment - Household Case Studies from Malakand District

‘Women’s Empowerment’ is a series of household case studies from District Malakand. The case studies contain information about how National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) has worked with poor households and communities to improve people's lives and livelihoods. These household case studies have been carried out to document and present NRSP's contributions. The household case studies also reflect upon the nature of the problems that rural women have faced, and how social guidance from NRSP contributed to improve their lives.

These household case studies conclusively demonstrate the value of the social mobilisation approach to capacitating poor women to improve their own lives and livelihoods. More than just economics, the approach also makes meaningful contribution to changing the local social norms that allow the women, more social space and legitimacy to play a greater role in their own development and in harnessing their own potential.

This is one such household case study that shows the positive social and economic change brought about through the good work of NRSP.

Case Study 2 of 6 – Noor ul Huda’s Fall and Rise

By Saba Saeed

Ms. Noor ul Huda, a 60-year-old woman, was born and raised in union council Hero Shah of district Malakand. She was the third among four siblings - three sisters and one brother. Her father worked as a labourer to earn a living. Noor did not receive any education and says that her father, as per social norms, was against girls’ education.



At the age of 20, Noor was married to her relative who lived in the same village. She started her married life in a two roomed cemented house with her husband, parents-in-law and two brothers-in-law. Her father-in-law was sick and could not do any work. The younger brothers were studying so her husband was the only source of income in the house. Noor used to work day and night to serve her in-laws and to take care of her sick father-in-law. Noor was blessed with four children, two daughters and two sons.

The financial situation started declining as the family members increased and one of her brothers-in-law also got married. It became difficult to live on one person’s income as there were times when the family didn’t have access to even one proper meal. Noor says: “The fights in the house started shortly after my brother-in-law got married and my husband and his brothers got in to serious arguments, so there use to be constant yelling and screaming.

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The fights were mainly because of difficult financial situation and growing expenses. The brother-in-law didn't contribute enough money to the house and expenses kept increasing because we had children and father-in-law's condition also worsened."

The family got separated when fights increased and Noor's brothers-in-law left leaving her and her family with the parents-in-law. Now Noor's husband had complete responsibility of his wife, children and parents. The situation did not improve with time, rather it worsened because her husband was growing old and it was becoming more difficult for him to work with the same energy and enthusiasm.

Noor said, "One day I was busy doing household chores and taking care of my youngest child when I heard a few children running and shouting with excitement. I looked outside from the door and saw people gathered in front of a vehicle. I stopped my neighbour as she was also heading towards the crowd and asked her that what was happening there. She told me that there were a few people from the city who wanted to meet local women. I also went along with her carrying my child in my arms. People gathered in one house and they told us they were from an organisation called NRSP and were here to help us in getting organised and support us. They asked us to form an organisation with ten to fifteen people and hold regular meetings."

Noor says: "I came home after attending the meeting and at night when I went to bed to sleep I finally had hope that things might change and that my children and I will not die because of poverty and shortage of food, I thought that finally my children will not be forced to live the life as I lived and their situation will be different than mine. I slept very peacefully that night with full of hope and new dreams."

The formation of Community Organisation (CO) was successful and the villagers participated actively with full hope that it will be benefit them. Noor said after the CO formation, she was asked by a Social Organiser to fill a form and apply for a loan from the Community Investment Fund (CIF). Noor applied for and received a CIF loan of Rs. 20,000 (USD 200) in a short period of time. Adding previous household savings, she bought a cow for the house. The cow was an asset as the family improved household income by selling cow's milk. She used to wake up early morning to milk the cow and then sell the milk in the neighbourhood. The number of households buying the milk gradually increased and so did Noor's income.

Noor was very regular and active in attending the meetings of CO. She became an influencer and encouraged other women to also attend the meetings and become CO member. Noor learned the importance of savings from meetings and started practicing it. The financial situation of her household gradually improved and she admitted all her four children in the school. Another major asset that she had was her husband, who was in perfect health. Noor applied for another CIF loan and received Rs. 20,000. The amount was used along with savings to set up a small tuck shop in the village.

The family has paid both the loans within the given time frame. Noor used to save Rs. 2000 per month to return the loan. Noor and her husband both worked very hard to educate their children. They believe in equal opportunities for both the genders. Her sons are now

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attending college and her daughters studied till tenth grade. She was able to marry her daughters in a respectable manner with her savings.

The problems for Noor did not end even after the marriage of her daughters. One of her daughters got divorced in the early years of her marriage when she gave birth to a baby girl. Her daughter's in-laws did not want a granddaughter so they kicked her out of the house three months after the birth of the child. She came back to her parents' house and Noor is now responsible for their upbringing. Noor did not give up hope and took her daughter to the meetings and registered her as member of the CO. Her daughter underwent vocational training and learned stitching and knitting. She now does her own work of sewing and stitching for her neighbours, and is now independent. She earns enough money to support herself and her daughter. Noor says that it's her dream to educate her granddaughter to college and university level to enable her to do something good for the society and for the women who are beaten up and considered a burden by their own families.

The family now lives a happy and satisfied life. Noor's both sons have graduated and are looking for employment. The daughter who was divorced is also independent and living a good life earning her own income. The family is now planning to expand their shop and add more items to the inventory.

Noor concludes her story, "My life has been a constant struggle and I'm happy that our situation changed when there was no hope left in my life. And of course change began when NRSP team visited our locality."

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