FIELD VISIT REPORT: BRACING PEOPLE’S INNATE POTENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMING THEIR LIVES

BALOCHISTAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (BRACE) PROGRAMME

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BALOCHISTAN
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1. **PURPOSE OF FIELD VISIT:**

The purpose of my field visits to districts Khuzdar and Pishin was to support the implementing partner Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) for the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment BRACE Programme in operationalisation of Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Quality Assurance and Control Plan (QACP) Checklists, Community Management Skills Trainings (CMST), Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT), Programme Implementation Manual (PIM) with reference to gender sensitivity guidelines application in the Programme interventions, and provision of technical support regarding development of Village Development Plans.

2. **KEY FINDINGS:**

Overall, the Programme activities have been performed according to the standardised and uniformed approach in BRACE Programme PIM, M&E Framework, and QACP Checklists developed by Rural Support Programmes Network with consultation of National Support Programme Network (NRSP), Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) Government of Balochistan (GoB) and Human Dynamics (HD), however due to some unavoidable reasons like tough terrain and law and order situation the pace of activities has been remained slow:

1. Standardised and uniformed approach was followed in all the processes required for the development of Village Development Plans (VDPs), and Community Organisations (COs).
2. CMST and CAT trainings and sessions were delivered according to the given guidelines and manuals
3. Programme activities were monitored, and their quality was guaranteed through the use and application of processes and checklists given in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and Quality Assurance and Control Plan of the BRACE Programme
4. Gender sensitivity of the Programme has been ensured through disaggregated activities for men and women members of the community organisations except few cases where implementing staff was guided for course correction
5. Progress of Programme activities particularly on female side have been remained very slow due to late completion of Poverty Scorecard Census, late hiring of field staff, tough and
vast terrain to access to communities living in rural areas, and cultural barriers particularly with reference to women related activities

6. Although SMT was approaching to male Village Organisations for the development of their respective villages’ VDPs, but women members of the households were not organised into their own community organisations yet due to late hiring of female staff. Women inclusion and participation in the VDP is very essential in order to prioritise their needs and concerns regarding their development.

3. KEY PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWED

During my field visit, I observed the implementation of following BRACE Programme activities in districts Khuzdar and Pishin by BRSP BRACE Programme staff.

3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Kani village is situated in Union Council Balina Wahir in Tehsil Wadh, district Khuzdar. It consists of 39 households and 329 populations. According to recently held poverty scorecard census under BRACE Programme 6 households are ultra-poor, 15 households are vulnerable poor, 5 households are transitory poor, and 13 households are non-poor.

On December 5, 2018, BRSP district Khuzdar BRACE Programme team developed Village Development Plan of Kani village with inclusive and participatory approach by ensuring participation of all households’ members of the community organisations of the village.

First of all, BRACE Social Mobilisation Team (SMT) carried out a round of introductions followed by a briefing about the objectives and the process of preparing the VDP. During the session the SMT shared the village profile; the key needs identified by the COs in their resolution and explain the VDP format.

The participants were guided to be realistic in identifying potential activities for which funding and support is expected from RSPs and other development organisations working in the village. List of potential activities were included in VDP. Having recorded and listed
all development activities in the sectors, activities related to Water, Education and communication were prioritised through voting and entered in the VDP format given. After listing the activities in order of priority, for each activity, a realistic estimated budget should be assigned.

Finally, with consensus of all the households’ members, VDP plan and Resources Mobilisation Plan were developed and approved according to the given processes and guidelines in the BRAECE Programme PIM. However, it has been noticed that women were not part of the process of VDP development due to their undone organisation into their own community organisations due to late hiring of female staff. During my interaction with the community organizations’ members, I emphasized on the importance of organisation into community organisation, development of VDP and RMP, and linkages with local government, and inclusion of women in the development process so that the benefits of development and prosperity are equally shared.
Based on my observations in the field, I wrote the following given article and published it in the London School of Economics and Political Science’s International Development Department.

**Village Development Plan (VDP): A Rural Manifesto: Partnership for Sustainable Development**

People living in rural areas are the most neglected, marginalised and poverty-stricken populations in Balochistan. Thousands of rural households are at risk of seeing their standards of living and means of livelihoods decline as rising temperature and continuing drought from the last fifteen years, scarcity of water and lack of basic needs are pushing rural populations to live in miserable and deplorable conditions. For thousands of poor households in rural Balochistan lack of basic facilities is a major challenge, and poses a high risk that can critically restrict their means of income and opportunities of socioeconomic development.

**Poor Service Delivery Responsible for Poor Socioeconomic Indicators**

Recently published World Bank report on The State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and Its Impact on Child Stunting, clearly recognizes lack of basic necessities of life as the main cause of poverty in Balochistan. The report shows that approximately 62 percent of the rural populations in Balochistan is living below the poverty line. The report highlights the worst condition of populations in the district of Washuk, the poorest district, in Balochistan province where 73 percent of the population is extremely poor, and lacking access to basic facilities of life.

Likewise, data collected from 249 rural Union Councils of eight districts of Balochistan under EU funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRACE) demonstrate similar figures of poverty and lack of access to basic needs in the programme areas. According to the census more than 80 percent of children are out of school due to lack of education facilities in the province. Approximately 95
percent of households do not have access to clean sources of drinking water. In most rural areas, humans and animals drink water from the same unhygienic sources of water.

In Socioeconomic Baseline Survey held in 2018 under BRACE Programme, when people were asked about whether they have been taken on board regarding any decision made for them by the local government? All rural households have chosen option NO against the question asked. In a question related to peoples’ satisfaction with the performance of local government, the response was mostly negative, meaning they are not satisfied with the performance of the local governments because they lack the power, resources and capacity to deliver peoples’ demands for better basic needs of life.

**Decentralisation Reforms and Polity’s Reluctance: What is the Problem?**

After decentralisation reforms in Pakistan in 2010, provision of basic facilities of life has become a provincial and local mandate. All powers and resources related to basic facilities of life including education, health, water and sanitation, technical and vocational training, and opportunities for access to decent work have been devolved from federal government to provincial down to local governments. The objectives behind these decentralization reforms were; to improve service delivery at village level; enhance efficiency of local governments; and give common people an opportunity to have their say in decisions made for their development and prosperity. But at the provincial level, still, sector planning frameworks remain weak, there is no clearly articulated sector-wide approach, no mechanism for giving importance and more resources allocation to human development programmes, and no actual presence of a robust and resourceful local governments at grassroots due to the reluctance of polity at provincial level to transfer powers and resources to local governments. If they do so, they will lose everything. This reluctance of transferring powers and resources is not only undermining better services delivery, development, and prosperity at the grassroots level, but, also to the already troubled nascent democracy in the country.
**Solution: A Rural Manifesto: Partnership for Sustainable Development**

Keeping in view the absence of a local development policy, sector planning and frameworks, and robust local governments in the province, the BRACE Programme helps rural communities to organise themselves into their own led community organisations to foster robust partnerships with the local government institutions for better service delivery at grassroots level. To have meaningful say in the decisions making process of the local government, these community organisations will develop and present their own Village Development Plans (VDP) for their respective villages.

VDPs work as the manifesto for the community organisations and are developed with common consensus by all the households in the village. In such plans, both men and women’s concerns for their development and prosperity are included. Once a VDP is developed, these community organisations then develop a resource mobilisation plan and identify potential contributors for executing their plans.

Recently, I had an opportunity of participation in the development process of Village Development Plan in Wadh, District Khuzdar, Balochistan, where under community organisation, community members discussed and identified their issues particularly regarding basic needs, formed their VDP and resources mobilisation plan, and identified potential contributors for the execution of their development plans. During the discussion, local government institutions were underlined to be the most viable contributor to deliver their plans.

Moreover, key development activities were identified and included in the VDP with common consensus of all the households in the village. These activities included provision of quality education for girls, improved health facilities for women, and technical vocational and education training center for training youth both boys and girls to have access to skills for improving their opportunities of having decent work for earning income.

All said that, now the ball is in provincial government’s court to not only develop local development policy, clearly articulated sector wide approach, and sector planning
frameworks but also establish robust local governments at the grassroots level. More importantly, devolve powers and resources to local governments so that they can institute and foster robust and sustainable partnership with community organisations for better service delivery at the grassroots level imperative for poverty reduction and socioeconomic development of the rural communities.

3.2 VILLAGE ORGANISATION FORMATION

Zard village is located in Union Council Dogan in Tehsil Zehri, District Khuzdar. It consists of 100 households and 831 populations. According to recently held poverty scorecard census under BRACE Programme 12 households are ultra-poor, 17 households are vulnerable poor, 21 households are transitory poor, and 50 households are non-poor. On December 6, 2018, early in the morning, I along with BRSP District Khuzdar BRACE Programme team visited Zard village with the purpose of formation of Village Organisation of already organised households in the village.

Village Organisation formation process started with the process given in the BRACE PIM. BRSP SMT gave a detailed presentation on the role and responsibilities of VO leadership.
Through consensus, the VO members elected their leadership. Mr. Amanullah, Mr. Muneer Ahmad and Mr. Ghulam Qadir were elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

During VO formation in Zard village, I interacted with community institutions members regarding the benefits of social mobilisation. They told me that because of social mobilisation they have developed the following attributes regarding their respective communities: Sense of ownership, Sense of rights and responsibilities, Conflicts resolution through Community institutions, and Check on school teachers and doctors for ensuring attendance.

Moreover, speaking to VO members, I highlighted the importance of women’s participation in community organisations and VDP development process considered as the linchpin of Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. Further, Recognizing the importance of women’s participation in local development and decision making process, BRSP, under EU funded five-year BRACE Programme and technical support of RSPN, has planned to mobilise thousands of women in to their own led community organisations in rural areas of district Khuzdar. This will engage women, particularly to support their
participation in programme activities, and to ensure their economic, political, and social empowerment.

3.3 MONTHLY MEETINGS OF VILLAGE ORGANISATION AND LOCAL SUPPORT ORGANISATION

On December 7, 2018, I along with BRSP BRACE team visited UC Abinooghay and participated in VO Abinooghay monthly meeting. The President of VO Mr. Attaullah Baloch, after brief interdiction, gave us a detailed presentation on the work of their VO formed under Balochistan Rural Development Programme in 2009. During their meeting, they presented a list of issues in their village. During my interaction with them, I told them that the basic purpose of BRACE Programme is to strengthen their already established organisation and link them with local government for the solution of their problems. Later on, I visited Local Support Organisation Abinooghay and held meeting with its leadership.

VO Abinooghay members participating in their VO monthly meeting
They have done a tremendous work in the past 7 years for their communities. From education, health to conflict resolution to name it they have done several activities for their communities.

List of key activities performed by LSO:

1. With the help of PHE and PPAF-BRSP, Supply Schemes were built in four different villages in the Union Council, with which 2,212 people are providing clean water.
2. With support of BRSP, UNDP and PPAF four underground water channels (Karez) were cleaned and now providing water to 415-acre agricultural land.
3. With support of BRSP and PPAF free medical camp was started in the Union Council. 537 patients benefited from it.
4. With support of UNDP 3750 trees were planted in the Union Council Abinooghay
5. With support of BRSP and PPAF 47 youth were provided TVET from reputed training institutions
6. With support of Member Provincial Assembly installed a transformer and provided electricity to five villages
7. With support of UNICEF 45 teachers were provided training from NCHD
8. With support of Girls Promoting Education built three rooms in the Union Council and 185 girls were admitted in the school
9. With support of BRSP computer lab was established in the school and teachers were trained
10. Through self-advocacy and campaign Government Middle School was upgraded to High School
11. With support of EDILINK established science lab in the school
3.4 COMMUNITY AWARENESS TOOLKIT SESSION

In the Afternoon, I along with BRSP BRACE Programme team visited Baghbana LSO in Baghbana UC where I participated in Community Awareness Toolkit session on health and cleanliness. During my interaction with the community members, I told them that how much is it important for them to have a clean and healthy environment. It is now everyone’s responsibility to keep their environment clean to protect against diseases. The basic purpose of this CAT session is to spread awareness about the importance of cleanliness and health for living a comfortable and stable life.

LSO Baghbana members participating in CAT session
3.5 COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT SKILLS TRAININGS

On December 10, 2018, I along with BRSP M&E Coordinator North and District Pishin M&E Officer travelled to field unit officer at Khanozai, Rood Mulazai and Gharshinan in district Pishin. In Rood Mulazai and Gharshinan, I participated in Community Management Skills Training. During the training, I commended their untiring efforts in the field for uplifting poor communities from poverty to prosperity and development. I told them that without their involvement and leadership, poor will never escape from the trapes of chronic poverty in their respective communities. Therefore, it is imperative for everyone to learn from these trainings how to better manage their communities and develop plans for their prosperity.

Community members participating in CMST in Rood Mulazai, District Pishin
3.6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, Programme activities have been implemented according to the given processes in the PIM, M&E Framework and QACP Checklists for ensuring standardisation, uniformity and quality. However, there are some areas where implementing partner BRSP needs some robust measures for improvements. These are:

1. Gender sensitization is the linchpin of overall Programme interventions so it is required that women should also be included in all the Programme activities with the same pace and attitude like for men.
2. Measures should be taken to speed up work on women related activities so that they also become part of Village Development Plans, Union Council Development Plans and District Development Plans imperative for inclusive and community driven development
3. Documentation and communication particularly on social media needs improvement. Documentation of success stories should be encouraged so that to get an assessment of benefits of the Programme interventions.
4. Programme staff needs to be sensitized further particularly regarding women related Programme activities to avoid delays and embarrassments
5. Female staff’s suggestions and feedback should be given due and an appreciative attention so that Programme interventions get the intended results
6. Female monitoring officers should be hired to monitor women related Programme activities. Male staff can’t do it because of cultural barriers.