Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

Emerging Outcomes of Adult Literacy & Numeracy Skills Training in Khuzdar, Balochistan
Acknowledgement

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgement ........................................................................................................... i

List of Abbreviations ........................................................................................................ v

List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... v

Overview of the BRACE Programme ................................................................................. 1

Background ......................................................................................................................... 3

BRACE’s Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ALNS) Training .................................. 4

Rationale of the Study ........................................................................................................ 6

Research Questions ............................................................................................................ 6

Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 7

Analysis of Monitoring data and Assessment .................................................................. 7

Khuzdar ................................................................................................................................. 7

Study design and sampling ................................................................................................. 8

Data collection ..................................................................................................................... 9

Data analysis and findings ................................................................................................. 10

Discussion .......................................................................................................................... 12

Context ................................................................................................................................. 12

Immediate Outcomes of ALNS Training Programme ...................................................... 15

Men’s Perspectives on ALNS Centres .............................................................................. 25

Challenges .......................................................................................................................... 26

Limitations .......................................................................................................................... 28
List of Abbreviations

ALNS  Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills
BAEC  Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission
BRACE Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme
BRSP  Balochistan Rural Support Programme
CIs   Community Institutions
CIF   Community Investment Fund
CO    Community Organisation
CPI   Community Physical Infrastructure
CRP   Community Resource Person
EU    European Union
GoB   Government of Balochistan
IGG   Income Generating Grant
JICA  Japanese International Co-operation Agency
LSO   Local Support Organisation
MIP   Micro Investment Plan
NRSP  National Rural Support Programme
PSC   Poverty Scorecard
PSLM  Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement
RSP   Rural Support Programmes
RSPN  Rural Support Programmes Network
TVET  Technical Vocational and Education Training
UC    Union Council
VO    Village Organisation

List of Figures

Figure 1: Mehr Khatoon showing her writing skills ...............................................................
Figure 2: Saeeda completing her classwork ...........................................................................
Figure 3: A participant photographed during her class .........................................................
Figure 4: A participant's notebook .......................................................................................
Overview of the BRACE Programme

The Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme was initiated in June 2019, and is a five-year European Union (EU) funded rural development Programme. BRACE drew its inspiration from the Rural Support Programmes’ approach to Community Driven Development in its unique Social Mobilisation Strategy which aims to build people’s institutions, for an interface with local authorities/governments and strengthen the interface between citizen and state. The Programme is executed by the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and two RSPs i.e. the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), in collaboration with Government of Balochistan (GoB).

The overall objective of the Programme is to support the GoB in reducing the negative impact of economic deprivation, poverty and social inequality, environmental degradation and climate change, and to turn this into opportunities to build and empower resilient communities participating actively in identifying and implementing socio-economic development activities on a sustainable basis in partnership with local authorities.

This Programme has been designed to support in mobilising and capacitating local communities of nine districts of Balochistan, with a focus on the social and economic empowerment of poor, marginalised men and women through organising them into their own community institutions from the settlement level to the Union Council and district levels. These institutions are formed, run and led by the men and women in nine programme districts across Balochistan. The nine BRACE Programme districts are: Zhob, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Jhal Magsi, Washuk, Loralai, Duki and Khuzdar with BRSP and Kech with NRSP.

Community institutions play a significant role in extending technical and financial support to the rural women and men, build social capital and creating demand for public services through a set of specialised interventions for the poorest members of these institutions in order to provide sustainable livelihoods and better accessibility to basic social and economic services. These interventions are:

- Community Investment Fund (CIF) i.e., community managed interest free small loans for income generation and diversification of economic activities at the micro, village level
- Income Generating Grants (IGG) for income generation and diversification activities for the poorest households
- Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET)
- Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ALNS) Training
- Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI)
- Support to Persons with Disability (PWD)
Most importantly, the Programme builds the capacity of community leaders through various leadership and community management skills training courses (Community Management Skill Training, Leadership Management Skill Training) and fosters social capital and networks that improve political, public and community interaction for the creation of public services demands.

The BRACE Programme aims to mobilise and organise 300,000 poor rural households in 249 Union Councils into a network of people’s institutions: 19,129 Community Organisations (COs) at the neighbourhood level, federated into 3,103 Village Organisations (VOs) at the village level which are then federated into 249 Local Support Organisations (LSOs) at the Union Council level. In addition, 31 LSO Networks will be formed at the tehsil and district levels. RSPs then provide support to improve the organised households’ lives and livelihoods, as well as to foster linkages between these multi-tiered community institutions and local government to improve local basic service delivery. This is expected lead to approximately 25% improvement in incomes of the poor household, and at least 40% of the households will graduate from the lowest to upper poverty scorecard\(^1\) band levels, and as a minimum of 50% of the households of the targeted areas will report improved access to basic social services. It is expected that 50% of the beneficiaries of socio-economic interventions will be women. At the district and provincial levels, community institutions are being linked to the government, with the provincial government working on a policy and budgetary framework that will institutionalise their relationship with the government.

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\(^1\) Poverty Score Card (PSC) is a tool for poverty targeting mainly developed to give practitioners a simple, effective and low cost tool for identifying the poor for targeted programme interventions. It is also useful for improving transparency and accountability in terms of poverty targeting and tracking the graduation process. PSC uses the proxy means test (PMT) formula, derived on the basis of Pakistan Standard Living Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2007. It is developed by the World Bank, used by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) for its cash transfer programme, and adopted by the RSPs as part of the social mobilisation process for poverty targeted interventions.
**Background**

Balochistan is the poorest province of Pakistan. While the province has about 44% of the land area of the country, its population share is less than 10%, and that too is scattered over thinly populated settlements.

The Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2015 alerts the nation to the alarming situation of education in Balochistan; the literacy rate is 44% with a ratio of 60% male and 25% female literacy.\(^2\) In comparison to other provinces, the lowest level of literacy for women is observed in Balochistan, as women confront a host of complex issues and realities resulting in their very limited access to education. Women by and large remain deprived of their rights including the right to education due to poverty, the burden of domestic work, early marriages, lack of availability and easy access to girls' schools and colleges, and a shortage of qualified female teachers, etc. In some areas of Balochistan with dominant feudal and religious influences, access to education for women, remains an unfulfilled.\(^3\)

The province lags behind the national averages in Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) indicators. Literacy is one of the major concerns, regardless of gender, of the SDGs and is the fourth goal out of a total of seventeen. The goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. Inclusiveness and equitable nature of education is considered both an asset and a capability, with innate as well as instrumental value. It is an asset as it increases the potential of a household to secure decent work and provide opportunities to escape poverty.

Given the disturbing conditions of education and a large portion of the population living in chronic poverty in Balochistan, the future of younger generations is threatened. Not only are they headed to becoming victims of chronic poverty but these conditions are also paralysing their innate potential to escape the shackles of poverty.

An analysis of data collected through Poverty Scorecard Census (PSC) conducted under BRACE in eight of its districts, shows that 85% of the population in the selected sample of 76 villages cannot read and write and the situation becomes further grim for women, as 94% are without reading and writing skills. Overall, more than 85% children are out of school because of chronic poverty, insufficient education infrastructure, scattered population in the vast stretch of the
geographical area, lack of faith in quality of education and lack of awareness on the importance of education.

Recognising the dire need of making education accessible, inclusive and equitable, the BRACE Programme collaborated with the Government of Balochistan’s Directorate of Non-Formal Education and the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) to implement an Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ALNS) Training Programme through the community institutions being fostered under BRACE by BRSP and NRSP. The BRACE Programme considers women’s literacy and skills development as a means for social change and a process by which women can learn, question, think and become agents of change. In short, an important for their empowerment.

**BRACE’s Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ALNS) Training**

**General Objectives:** Literacy is an indispensable tool for alleviating poverty, contributing to human development and effective social and economic participation. Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning and has the ability to transform human lives. Also, Pakistan’s constitutional decree of Article 25-A declares education as fundamental right for children. According to Article 25-A, all children between the ages of 5 and 16 years are entitled to free, compulsory education provided by the state of Pakistan. In the case of mothers, literacy plays an important role in enhancing the quality of lives for their family and children.

The lack of literacy is correlated to poverty and the lack of human and social development. The overall purpose of the ALNS component under the BRACE Programme is to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to women community members and engage them in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Furthermore, to support the female population in BRACE districts, it is expected that economic empowerment elements through Community Institutions coupled with a strong literacy and numeracy skill component will help them influence gender roles positively and facilitate them in mainstreaming their role towards social and economic empowerment, and to play a more active role at the household and community levels.

The short term objectives of the ALNS in BRACE Programme are as follow:

- To provide basic reading and writing skills to illiterate women
- To enable learners to read and write their names
- To empower women to help their women CIs in record keeping

![Figure 1: Mehr Khatoon showing her writing skills](image-url)
- To support women to become familiar with basic mathematical numbers so as to dial a phone number in case of an emergency
- To enable them to read expiry dates of medicines

**ALNS Outreach:**

A total of 10,720 women learners (8,440 in BRSP districts and 2,280 in NRSP) are expected to participate in the ALNS course during the Programme period in the nine districts of BRACE. A total of 217 Adult Literacy and Numeracy centres have been set up so far; 51 centres out of the total of 217 have completed their six-month long course. Out of 5,596 women learners (graduates and current learners), 1,223 have graduated from these 51 centres. There are 4,373 learners currently enrolled in the ongoing cycle of the ALNS intervention. 1,500 of these learners are enrolled in 50 centres in Kech (NRSP area) and are scheduled to complete their course by June 2020. The remaining 2,873 learners are enrolled in 116 centres in 8 districts where BRSP implements BRACE. After completing the six month long course, these learners have the literacy and numeracy level of a third grade student. The learners are being selected based on their Poverty Scorecard rating and their willingness to acquire basic level literacy skills. After completing the course, the learners are assessed by the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission (BAEC). The curriculum adopted in the centers is the approved curriculum of the Government of Balochistan. BRSP has signed an MoU with the Non Formal Literacy Directorate established under the Social Welfare Department. The course is composed of English, Urdu and Math. In addition, Life Skills Education, a journey of development through savings and education are also part of the curriculum.

**How are the ALNS Centres established?**

The field teams identify villages which do not have public schools in them, the CIs are informed of the intervention and involved in the process through social mobilisation. The LSO of the area recommends two villages with a need for an ALNS centre based on this criterion. The RSP field team, along with the CIs identifies a qualified teacher to establish the centre.

Deserving and illiterate women for the ALNS course are identified from the PSC database of the village and a list and with their details is shared with respective CIs. The CIs then finalise the lists of willing learners and provide these names to the RSP social mobilisation teams in their respective Union Councils.

Prior to establishing the literacy centres, the selected teachers are provided a three-day training on the curriculum by master trainers. Master trainers are trained by a trainer of the Non Formal Literacy Directorate and JICA.

A district wise number of centres which have completed the six-month long course, graduated learners and number of teachers as of March 2020 are given below:
### Rationale of the Study

Balochistan's population structure has a women's socio-economic empowerment crisis. Majority of the women especially the rural women are illiterate, unskilled, and hence not empowered. Introduction of BRACE Programme’s Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills training component is an attempt to improve the situation. A study of ALNS training is therefore in need to establish whether it has been beneficial so far. It is hoped that the findings would inform the implementing partners on the needs of this component that has an impact on females’ empowerment and prepare them for further improvements and future opportunities. It informs the Programme’s implementing partners and other stakeholders of successes and challenges of the ALNS Training. Success of the Programme would ensure continued support and failure would prompt corrective measures. Findings of the study will also provide lessons to other organisations working in the rural communities in the country to encourage and facilitate interventions along life-long learning.

### Research Questions

The study was guide by the following questions:

1. Did the rural women of Khuzdar district benefit from the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills Training?
2. How ALNS training is contributing in empowering women and what were the social and economic outcomes of this Training?
Methodology

Analysis of Monitoring data and Assessment

A detailed desk review of the district data, particularly of the centres selected for the qualitative study was conducted. Detailed monitoring by BRSP in each district keeps track of the number of centres established, the number and details of learners enrolled e.g., their age and PSC score and the number of learners graduating from the ALNS Training program.

The BRACE Programme, is working in close coordination with the provincial government. The Education Department at provincial level has commissioned the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission to assess and certify the ALNS Training learners at the end of the course. The BACE has set 30% passing marks as the criteria for a learner to graduate. However, regardless of the results BRSP awards all the learner a completion of training certificate in recognition of their efforts and to keep them motivated.

As part of the analysis of the ALNS Training intervention, the research team has acquired and analysed these assessment results. The fact that there was no baseline assessment test for the training means that this study is unable to assess progress made by each learner, although all of them were not literate. However, the assessments present an interesting picture which is elaborated upon in the coming section.

Khuzdar

The average age of the learners in Khuzdar overall is 31 and the average PSC score is 20.1 ranging from 1 to 64. Here 1 means the lowest PSC score and is the poorest. The 224 learners from 9 centres obtained an average of 122 marks out of 200, which translates to 61%. Out of a total of 50 marks, they had an average score of 22 in English, 32.3 in Urdu, 35 in Life Skills and 40.8 in Math. Students who have obtained a minimum of 30% marks have graduated the classes. However, all participants are given the course completion certificates. The assessment result for the district is shown below:
The 25 learners of UC Baghvana 1 were assessed at the completion of their ALNS Training Programme. The batch had an average marks of 92.84 out of 200, which is 46.42%. The average age of the batch was 27 years. The PSC score of the learners ranged from 8 to 46 and the average PSC score was 19.8. Out of a total of 50 marks, they had an average score of 11.88 in English, 19.24 in Urdu, 28 in Life Skills and 35.13 in Math.

The 27 learners of UC Abi Noghay had an average of 122 out of 200 marks, which is 61.13%. The average age of the batch was 32 years and the average PSC score was 25.5 ranging from 8 to 46. Out of a total of 50 marks, they had an average score of 13.15 in English, 35.44 in Urdu, 33.11 in Life Skills and 45.63 in Math.

The results show that the respondents scored better on an average in assessments for Life Skills and Math. One of the reasons for lower marks in Urdu is that the women are not Urdu speakers. For them to learn Urdu is a challenge.

**Study design and sampling**

This qualitative study utilised the method of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with two groups and in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with six women who attended the ALNS training. The team interviewed three Community Resource Persons (CRPs), a teacher and held FGDs with 38 village women. Before the discussions and meetings, the purpose, nature and ethical aspects of the study were explained by the members of the field team and participants were invited for the discussion. Below are the purposively selected Union Councils, villages and number of participants of the study:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union Council</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>No. of participants in FGDs</th>
<th>Interview with CRPs</th>
<th>Interview with Teacher</th>
<th>In-depth interview with learner</th>
<th>Key Informant interviews with male community members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abi Noghay</td>
<td>Killi Yar Muhammad</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 (Rashida)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (Asiya, Sajida)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghban I</td>
<td>Shoal Abad</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (Saeeda)</td>
<td>1 (Zahida)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tootak</td>
<td>Sardari Shar</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2 (Noreen, Afshan)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data collection**

A theme list was developed by the study team to determine the direction and content of the interviews based on the study objectives, and shared with local staff to ensure that questions were appropriate for the context. For each theme, open ended questions were developed, and a probing method was used during the FGDs and in-depth interviews. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in March 2020, at the ALNS centres where the respondents said they were comfortable. All interviews were digitally recorded and lasted two to three hours each.

FGDs were conducted with the learners who had completed their six-month long ALNS course. Interviewees were teachers, CRPs, and learners in the training who were either currently involved or had been involved in the course since the beginning of the training. The interviews and FGDs sought information on the nature of the training and its benefits. Furthermore, pre-training situations and experiences were also gauged through open discussions with the groups of learners. In the case of the participants, the questions were designed to elicit narratives of experience and thus invited participants to describe the events and circumstances that led to training enrolment; share their experience in the training and their experiences resulting from the training.

To gauge the multi-dimensional benefits including social, health, educational, women empowerment and economic outcomes, open ended questions were queried with follow-up probes. For the social capital outcomes, to help check the accuracy of noted outcomes, where possible, community members especially leaders of community institutions to which ALNS Training participants belonged were also interviewed to cross check with them. The BRSP district team was also engaged to conduct interviews with the male family members of the ALNS participants to gauge their perspectives on how they see women’s literacy of general and their views regarding the participation of their women relative’s participation in the ALNS course.

It is important to note here that it was possible to access the learners and teachers from two centres which had completed their cycles, as well as the male relatives of the learners because
of the rich, active and well-connected network of CIs fostered under the BRACE Programme. As all participants of the ALNS course are CI members, and the ones who take loan or receive grants as IGG and enrol in TVET are able to manage and keep better records.

Data analysis and findings

The interviews and FGD notes and transcripts were thematically categorised. This inductive approach involves systematically identifying recurring themes in the data. The interview notes and transcripts were categorised according to the areas covered in the theme list. Following this, sub themes with the same meaning that emerged within each theme were identified. For example, a respondent said, “At the ALNS centers, I have become friends with other women, who now visit my house more often and we practice writing together.” Another respondent said, “I trust the friends I have made at this center and I have started to socialise with them now.” These two examples and many other similar quotations fall under the thematic category of social outcome.

The table below is a selection of the outcomes that respondents identified from their learning experience corresponding to the themes. The table lists the outcomes reported by the interviews and FGDs with the learners.

This table is not meant to convey the impression that all learning centres produce benefits in all categories or that the same learning centre produces the same set of benefits for all its participants. The point of the table is to show that the three learning centres did produce a wide range of benefits for the participants and, directly or indirectly, for the communities of which they are members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context: Poverty, lack of schools, remoteness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Education and learning | 1. Acquiring credentials  
2. Educational aspiration  
3. Progressing from non-formal ALNS training to formal education  
4. Helping in children’s education |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health outcomes</th>
<th>1. Improving physical wellbeing:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For example, improving dietary practices, improving physical fitness, information about maternal health check-ups/check-up dates, vaccinations dates, medicines’ intake dose/measurements and expiry date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Improving psychological wellbeing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For example, reducing loneliness and isolation, increasing self-confidence etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic outcomes</th>
<th>1. Capacitating women to understand training material in TVET and preparing them to manage their CIF, and IGGs at the household level.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Savings – learn about importance of savings and form saving committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social outcomes</th>
<th>1. Quality of social network:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing trust levels among participants and in their networks outside the learning group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changing in belief and interaction with people who are different from oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Managing time more effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prioritising and managing self-development activities and household chores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Building networks/bonding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes in nature of networks that the learners are already members of, Enhancing socialization/friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing frequency of interactions among community members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Linkages for collective action: Activities undertaken within and outside the learner’s group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>1. Improved access to informal support systems running parallel to the literacy training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Self-Efficacy; changes in belief regarding self and one’s ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Improved access to learning a new language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Decision making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

This section opens the discussion about the above themes and their corresponding outcomes.

**Context**

Females constitute 47.5% of the population of district Khuzdar as per Census- 2017. According to the Education Management Information System (2016-17) of the Government of Balochistan, girls’ enrolment rate at primary level is lower as compared to boys’ enrolment rate. This difference increases at the higher levels of education as student move from primary to middle to high schools. Although girls’ literacy rate is increasing, this remains a challenge in rural areas due to strict patriarchal norms.

According to the Pakistan District Education Rankings 2017 by Alif Ailaan, district Khuzdar is ranked at number 122 out of the 141 ranked districts in Pakistan, on the education score index. This index considers learning, gender parity and retention levels in a district. The gross enrolment ration at Middle level (age eleven to thirteen) for rural areas in Khuzdar in 2014–15 stood at 36 for boys whereas for girls it is only 4. Girls’ dropout rate is high in middle and high school levels. A detailed socio-economic profile of the district is attached as Annex-I.

A study by Shazia.S et.al (2018) observes that women in Khuzdar district are mostly dependent on men in economic spheres due to cultural barriers and limited mobility. Sarfaraz (1997) also reports a similar situation on women’s socioeconomic status:

> Women's social status and economic roles vary in different groups, according to different social customs, modes of livelihood and level of economic well-being. Education also plays an important role in the determination of the position and status of women. Educational opportunities are limited for women. The knowledge they would need to assume positions of equality is not accessible and the cycle of subordination continues. In the economic domain as well, men usually control the processes. Women perform all
the daily tasks of household maintenance and care of family members. This includes the
collection of firewood and water from sources which may be far away, particularly in the
rural zone. However, upper class women have an easy life because female servants help
them. Teenage girls are sent by their parents to graze cattle, beside taking part in all the
ordinary household duties. After marriage, they have to do all these activities beside
raising the children. Usually women in Khuzdar have no share in the property of their
parents.

In most of the socio-economic activities “men hold a monopoly of power in the public area.
In the political domain, local level chiefs and tribal authorities are always men, as are the
members of local councils or jirga”. The burden of tasks associated with reproductive roles
and household responsibilities falls solely on women. Illiteracy, poverty, lack of resources
and limited time may seriously hamper a woman’s efforts to ensure the well-being of her
family. Women have no awareness about their rights. This is mainly due to lack of
education as the majority of the women are illiterate. Women participate with men in
agriculture and livestock activities. But there is no other social or political activity in which
women participate. Their role is mainly concentrated in the household. [3]

In this backdrop, the ALNS Training Programme under BRACE provides basic literacy and
numeracy skills to women community members to engage them in systematic and sustained self-
educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. As of
March 2020, 720 participants were enrolled in ALNS training in nine centres in district Khuzdar.
A majority of the participants fall in the age ranges of 46-55 years, followed by the age group 15-
25. At the time of data collection, 220 participants had completed the six-month course and
appeared in the final exam. In informal discussions with the field staff at the district level, the staff
said that community institutions’ women leaders take a keen interest in the courses. 41 out of the
220 women, who had completed the course, were the leaders of community institutions.

BRSP works in a total of 39 Union Councils of Khuzdar. It aims to create two ALNS centres in
each UC, bringing the total number of centres to 80. As of March 2020, there are twenty ongoing
ALNS centres in the district while nine centres have completed their six-month course.

Poverty: A majority of the ALNS participants belonged to low income families. Men are the
breadwinners of the families and their major occupation was daily wage labouring. 106 out of 220
ALNS participants’ fathers worked as daily wage labourers for livelihood. 31 relied on farming and
cultivation for their livelihoods while 52 were reported as unemployed. Hence it can be inferred
that poverty was one of the reasons for their illiteracy. Other categories of occupations of
participants fathers are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation of Father</th>
<th>Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation/Farmer</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (not specified)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. servant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi Govt. servant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopkeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews and FGDs reported that previously there was no trend of getting a formalised education. The participants confirmed that they lived in poverty and getting an education was not an option for them. They also mentioned that there was no formal schooling system in their villages until recently.

“Now, children attend madrassa,” a woman responded. In some Union Councils, there are Madrassas, where children learn Quran.

Talking about unavailability of schools and their remoteness a woman said, “In our village, we do not have a single primary school till now. And the school in another village is far away, we do not have any transportation system. Our young children fear the stray dogs. Even older boys do not go to those places.”

Further, the cultural context has a strong influence on women’s and girls’ education. As one of the teachers mentioned, “Girls are usually married off at their young age. My parents lived in a town in Khuzdar and I was able to complete grade eight. Then, I was married here. Here, people have many other issues and female’s education is not a priority. People even think it is a wastage of time to educate females. I always wanted to do something for these women and now when I have this opportunity to teach the adults, it feels good that I am doing something positive.”

Indeed, poverty, lack of access to schools, lack of awareness about education, the remoteness of rural areas, and binding cultural norms that are the causes of high illiteracy in Khuzdar district of Balochistan.

14
Immediate Outcomes of ALNS Training Programme

During the thematic analysis, which involves systematically identifying themes and trends in data, emerging outcomes were identified. The main themes included, education and learning, health, economic, social outcomes and women’s empowerment. The main themes and their emerging outcomes are discussed in detail below:

Education and Learning

A study published by Oxfam and written by Juliet McCaffery, Juliet Merrifield, and Juliet Millican distinguishes four types of literacy; literacy as skills, literacy as tasks (viewing literacy as the ability to accomplish tasks in daily life), literacy as social practices and literacy as critical reflection [6]. For this section, we employ the first two categories to collect and analyse the data from our respondents.

The study uses Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s definition for literacy as skills; it is “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

The idea of literacy as ‘tasks’ is borrowed from UNESCO’s definition: a person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his [sic] group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community’s development.”

While the former is reflective of literacy programmes filling in the void left by a lack of formal education, the latter is indicative of skills needed to perform as an employee, a citizen, a family member and a member of the community. The following sub-headings are reflective of the understanding derived from both these definitions; they expand on adult women and girls’ educational journey as well as an improved belief that they can employ this learning to find jobs.

Un-availability of schools

All three villages which were visited for this study had no local, public schools, until recently. In village (Killi) Yar Muhammad, in UC Abi Noghay, the GoB has established a primary school two years ago and a girls’ primary school in village Sardari Shar, UC Tootak, three years ago. There are still no local schools for girls or boys in Shoal Abad (UC Baghbana). This lack of schools produces a large demographic of adult women who neither had access to public schools nor were they brought up in a culture where they saw women (or even men) around them getting an education. It is important to note that a few of the learners in all three centres have previously taken Quran lessons from a local community leader, but otherwise all respondents lacked formal education (with the exception of one learner, Zahida, in Shoal Abad). Traditionally, religious lessons do not involve reading ability in Urdu or any local language. Those studying the Quran often repeat, in Arabic, after the teacher. BRACE Programme’s ALNS intervention provided these
women a chance to get an education, harvesting their desire to learn with easy access to centres and, hence, in a culturally acceptable manner.

45 years old Mehr Khatoon, from Killi Yar Muhammad (UC Abi Noghay) learned to study the Quran but had not received any formal education before this course. The ALNS intervention gave her a chance at studying, which she made the most of. She has now completed her ALNS course and revises what she learnt regularly, taking special care to keep her notebook and books safe. She can read the newspaper and tell the time. She says “if I could, I’d be a child again so I could study”. Another respondent, Sajida, from the same village explained how she had previously regarded education as a negative thing. However, when the local teacher, Saba, invited her to attend the first few classes at the centre, she agreed and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Soon, she became so involved and excelled to become the top of the class because of her enthusiasm for learning.

Zahida from Shoal Abad received early primary schooling before getting married and moving to Shoal Abad. She was delighted to restart and complete her education at the centre and revive her passion for learning. Zahida states that she is truly happy in these three hour classes at the centre every day as she gets to sit with her friends, laugh and learn. Zahida shared her plans for the future, that after getting her completion certificate till grade three, she plans to use this to study further or get a job at the local school which is to be established soon. With the money she earns from her job, she will not only support her children but will also give herself a well-deserved break from wood collection by buying a liquefied petroleum gas cylinder for cooking. This closely relates education with a greater awareness and a will to improve her life.

The ALNS Centres have instilled hope for a new and changed life, within the learners. The teachers have a means of earning money while staying at home and learners like Zahida now envision a future where they might be able to earn for themselves as well as continue their educational journey.

**Opportunities for Children**

Many mothers in the ALNS Centre are conscious of their improved ability to positively influence their children’s lives and prospects. They want to provide their children a better future through education.
Mehr Khatoon, 45, a very active learner of the ALNS Centre in Killi Yar Muhammad insisted that her fourteen-year-old granddaughter Asiya, who was not enrolled in a school, join her at the ALNS Centre. She was able to convince her daughter to allow Asiya to enrol in the ALNS Programme as she believed that the Centre was a good place for women and girls. Once enrolled, Asiya began her educational journey. She says that when she watched TV earlier, she found it very amusing to see children of her age going to school. She had always wanted to study as well, however, there wasn’t a school in the vicinity until two years ago. At the ALNS Centre, she, along with her helpful grandmother, performed very well. Not only did Asiya graduate from the ALNS Centre with flying colours, but Mehr Khatoon is also still actively involved in her granddaughter’s education. She shares that she also draws dotted lines on a slate, for her other granddaughter and grandson who study in grade one, to trace and practice writing.

Thirteen-year-old Haleema, like Asiya, wants to study further. After this ALNS course, both young girls can qualify for the local school’s admission test. While Haleema will join grade four, the teachers at the local school have informed Asiya that as she has a good grasp of the concepts thus she is able to skip grade four and start school with grade five directly. Asiya aspires to be a teacher when she completes her education. In this manner BRACE Programme is also encouraging and fostering an upcoming batch of potential teachers in areas which previously did not have qualified teachers in the locality.
25-year-old Saeeda, who is also the manager of her CO Gulab in Killi Yar Muhammad (UC Abi Noghay) has four children, three boys and one girl. Her husband is a daily wage worker who works on land, to grow tomato and wheat. Previously, she stayed at home, stitching and doing embroidery, and her children used to help their father in the field. She says that she now envisages a different future for her children. “Previously my children used to work with us in the field, but now they want to go to school”, she said. Although this change is gradual, it aspires hope of a changing society.

**Health Outcomes**

The views and experiences shared in the in-depth interviews and FGDs were similar for respondents in both UCs. The pattern of the data was analysed and categorised into two sub-themes: i) improving mental wellbeing and ii) improving physical wellbeing.

**i) Improving mental wellbeing:**

The participants described a healthy woman as one who has no “worries” and “stress” in her life. They indicated a healthy woman feels “free” and has a smiling face.

One of the participants said, “when we come to the learning centre, we forget about our worries and issues. The learning centre has become a source of happiness for us. We laugh and feel free and open in this centre.”

“When this course ends, we will have to go back to the same stressful routine which we were previously following” another woman added with some disappointment. Almost all the participants agreed with her that they genuinely feel happy coming out of their homes and spending time on self-improvement.

On asking about their family relations, they mentioned that the change in their mental health has also contributed to a more harmonious home life.

A participant mentioned with pride, “Earlier my mother-in-law used to get upset about this activity. Now, her behaviour has changed. When I get late for school, she says that she will do the rest of work, and I must attend the class like everyone else.” She continued, “I do not hit my children now. I treat everyone in the family with respect and they respect me too.”
A young woman narrated energetically, “My brother and I used to have arguments and fights over the TV remote control. I like watching dramas and he loves watching cricket. In the recent PSL matches, I enjoyed watching cricket with him as I understood the scores, wickets and number of balls bowled. My family members, especially my brother, were very happy to see me watching cricket without any argument, peacefully. My family is happy and I feel good too.”

However, another woman said laughing, “My husband became angry with me once, because I did not cook meals for him, and I stayed longer in school. When my class fellows came to know about this, they were all concerned for me. Now, he is fine. He only wants his meal on time, which I always provide on time.”

A young woman commented, “having our own money can also bring happiness. At least we could buy our children’s clothes and not ask our husbands for money. We do not have money, this is stressful; for every penny we spend, we are answerable to our husbands.”

Hence, literacy has impacted the women’s mental life positively and also brought harmony in most of the families. A feeling of achievement was definitely observed among the ALNS participants in all centres.

**ii) Improving physical wellbeing:**

Women reported that their journey of the ALNS centre has brought benefits to their physical health as well. One of the FGD participants voluntarily narrated,

“When women from other villages usually go out to collect water, but in my village, through a BRSP’s project [BCDP], we have water at our doorstep. So, we do not have any other reason for stepping outside boundaries of our home. Our men do the farming, and we do household chores. We do not get any chance to go out. This ALNS centre has become a means for exercise. The centre is about 10 minutes away, and we walk for 20 minutes daily. This has actually helped me a lot. It also improves my mood, and is good for my legs.”

Further, the study data showed a vital role of the ALNS centres and the BRACE CAT sessions on children’s health. All women agreed that post-training, mothers ensure better child care, nutritional care, regular vaccinations and have better health themselves.

Rukhsana, “Now I can read the calendar and mark the date of vaccination.”

Saeeda, “I know where the expiry date of a medicine is usually written and I can read it. I check the expiry date of medicines when my husband brings them home. I now dispose of expired medicines.”

Meher, “We learned many things about health and hygiene in a monthly session [CAT]; at the ALNS Centre we are reminded again of the importance of good hygiene practices and we try to keep ourselves and our children tidy.”
Sughra, “Many of our classmates were pregnant, now they are on leave, and learned about their monthly check-ups. We usually call out to each other and go for check-ups in groups.”

From this it is obvious that women’s literacy enables them to act effectively for their own and their family’s health.

**Economic Outcomes**

Experiences reported in this study showed potential for economic growth. Participants involved in the ALNS Programme were earlier illiterate, now they have developed the building blocks required to participate in economic/income generating activity.

Sughra said, “When I was invited for this training, I was informed by a villager that they are teaching how to stitch clothes in this centre. I had joined this centre solely for that purpose. I even argued after attending the class that they should teach us stitching or any other activity so that we start to earn something for our families.” On asking why she needs to earn, she said, “It’s good to have our own money. I ask my husband for everything and I feel bad. I want to have my own money so I spend it as I like.” She continued, “The teacher made me understand that if I do not know how to measure the size/ length of a dress, how will I be able to make it? Then I realised that education is necessary for stitching clothes as well. Now, I can read the numbers on the scale, and I can also write. I have registered my name for a tailoring training [upcoming TVET/BRACE], and I am waiting for the opportunity. I hope it will start soon.”

Zahida, 20, says “I wanted to get an education since I was a child, but it was just a dream, till now. People in our society do not consider women’s education as important but I had a desire to get an education. When I heard about the learning centre through my CO, I got excited and shared the news with my husband. He said right away, ‘literate women are not good women.’ I tried to convince him, saying it’s within the village, but he refused. However, I started to attend the class. I managed to finish all household chores before 2 pm, so that no one at home would accuse me of ignoring my household work for learning. Our men do not encourage our mobility for these activities. For fetching water, we walk for two km, and for collecting firewood we search in far flung areas, men do not have any issue if we go out for these things. However, they prohibit us from attending meetings and learning sessions within the village. Anyways, he found that the centre is run by women and many others also allow their family women to attend. So, he stayed silent. I kept attending the classes, now I can read and write. I have passed the final exam and they [CRPs] have said that we will receive a grade three certificate. I really want to continue this class, all of us want to continue, but it has ended.”

When asked about how she wants to use the learning, she said with a smile on her face, “Ten years ago, we received an approval from the government for a primary school in our village. I have heard that this year they will establish it. I want to be able to work in that school. I look forward to a job in that school. I will continue practicing writing and read newspapers at home to improve my reading and writing abilities.”
Social Outcomes

The teachers of ALNS and CRPs reported that the centres have become powerful agents of socialisation in that they play a vital role in preparing women to get actively involved in communities and community life, in general. They have also contributed towards building and strengthening existing relationships of the women participating in the course. In order to explore this change in more detail, qualitative data, based on the question ‘what impact has your participation in the ALNS Programme had on your personal, family, and community life?’ was further analysed. It is important to hear them and be aware of what is important to them.

Quality of the network:

In this study ‘Quality of the Network’ refers to the trust levels among the community members in their networks or groups. Improved levels of trust and effectiveness of existing community institutions are ways of identifying whether the ALNS Programme makes a positive difference to the social capital of a community and Community Organisations where learners are members.

Also, changes in the level and kind of interactions among community members is an indicator of change in social capital. Here are some of the points that confirm that the ALNS Programme has positively impacted the learners’ social capital.

i. Participants’ interaction with teachers:

For many women, teachers played an important role in helping them change the way they saw themselves and interacted with others. Women in UC Tootak in village Sardari Shar reported that their teacher encouraged them to talk to each other with respect, and participate in the class. This increased their self-confidence, and hence their active participation in class.

Sajida from Tootak pointed out, “It is heart-warming that although our teacher is pregnant, she doesn’t miss any class. We feel that she needs a chair and a table, but she keeps standing to write on the board, make us understand and ensuring everyone is participating. She sits on the floor to discuss and talk to us individually. She is educated but she never makes us feel like we know nothing, I respect her for that. She doesn’t treat us like we are illiterate.”

Participants from village (Killi) Yar Muhammad of UC Abi Noghy highlighted that common cultural background of the teacher and students as a reason they continued attending their course, till its completion. Faiz Bibi said, “In the beginning I was reluctant, but as the teacher was just one of us, our neighbour, so there was no reason for me or my family to leave the class.” Saira from the same centre mentioned, “I had said, ‘no’ to the invitation to joining this centre initially. Then, Jamila suggested I attend a few classes to see if I like it and I would be free to leave if I didn’t. I attended two classes, it was fun. Within a few days, I became friends with many class fellows. The teacher spoke the same language. Three hours spent in this centre were the best hours of the day. So, I continued my course.”
ii. Participants’ interaction with each other:

Many respondents spoke about how they have made changes to their daily routines to fit in the hours of learning and socialising at the ALNS Centre. This is something they do happily because they enjoy getting out of their homes to come to the Centre, spending time with fellow community members and stimulating their minds.

In village Shoal Abad, Union Council Baghbana 1, the participants had a tea party three to four times during the course. Zahida, who had previously studied in a primary school in the urban centre of Khuzdar, had seen this activity at her school. Thinking back to how she had enjoyed this with her friends in school, she pitched the idea to her fellow learners in the ALNS Centre. They unanimously agreed to having these regular tea parties and enjoyed them immensely. They invited the Senior Officer from BRSP to the last party and still speak fondly of that time.

Young Zahida, who was married at twelve, reminisces of her time at the Shoal Abad ALNS Centre stating that to make time for the ALNS class, she would complete her domestic chores, like getting fodder for her goat, in the morning. She would not miss a class even when her child would be sick. The only time she skipped class was when she had guests over and would have to help her husband and the men of the family in serving them. During the six-months of the course, Zahida would wake up happy and excited to go to the Centre. She tolerated her husband’s rebukes about her going to the Centre. She states, “It feels like we are in jail now” (after the course has ended).

A respondent from the ALNS Centre in Killi Yar Muhammad too stated that she was so excited to come to the Centre that she would wrap up her chores before the class and adjust the rest of her chores to be done on a Sunday.

iii. Strengthening the existing social capital:

It was observed and noted from the discussions that the nature and frequency of interactions have strongly impacted the existing social capital. It was noted that 98% of the study participants were already members of Community Organisations formed under BRACE and a few of them were the CO leaders.

A two-way relationship is found between ALNS learners’ group and community institutions. Learners reported that they learned about the ALNS Programme in one of the monthly meetings of COs. The community institutions act as platforms to learn about various opportunities. The daily interactions now at the ALNS centres bring the community closer to each other, by developing capacity, trust and respect for each other.

Saeeda, a CO manager, belongs to village (Killi) Yar Muhammad and said that this ALNS has enhanced CO members’ confidence. She said, “Here [ALNS Centre] women interact with each
other for three hours on a daily basis, but for the CO we meet once in a month. We have become real friends here. Now, many of my CO members can write their names, they confidently write it at the end of our CO meeting. They participate in discussions.”

On asking if the ALNS training was any help in fulfilling CO duties more effectively, Saeeda said, “I can read the agenda of the meeting, writing is still a problem. Most of us can write our names. I can write names of CO meeting participants and the amount they saved. I can talk to CO members more confidently in meetings as now we know each other well. And I know they trust me.”

During the FGD with women in village Shoal Abad of UC Baghbana 1, it was observed that women identified that the topics they learned in the Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) Sessions are repeated at the ALNS Centre. They acknowledged that health awareness sessions are re-emphasised. “We learned about vaccinations in our monthly CO meeting, here we learned to write dates for reminders, for these,” a participant mentioned. Women in this UC were found quite knowledgeable about their COs.

In UCs, Aby Noghay and Tootak, respondents (who were also CI members) were not completely aware of the objectives of COs. However, they have found ALNS to be a platform where they can socialize and learn. Saeeda happily shared, “Now I go to my ALNS friends’ homes when I feel bored at home. They also visit my home.”

The above experiences shared by the village women have revealed that the ALNS Programme has strong and positive evidence of impacts on social outcomes, especially where COs are active.

**Empowerment**

A study commissioned by UNESCO in 2009 and conducted by Nelly P. Stromquist, of the University of Maryland defines empowerment as “the set of feelings, knowledge, and skills that produce the ability to participate in one’s social environment and affect the political system.”

Stromquist goes on to expand the concept of empowerment into four dimensions; cognitive, economic, social and psychological. These dimensions have been used to analyse the collected evidence.

1. **Economic Dimension**

The ALNS Centres are set up through the community institutions that have a savings programme. However, the women learners of the active ALNS Centre in Union Council Tootak shared that they have organised another savings programme for the ALNS Centre participants. Eleven learners have been contributing up to PKR 1,000 each; so far they have had two rounds of saving and the next round is due soon. The money is kept with their teacher for safekeeping and is lent, interest free to the contributing women, as per the traditional ‘committee’ system. One learner shared how she had purchased a washing machine with her savings, she was now able to efficiently get her household chores done and invest her remaining time on revising her lesson.
from the ALNS Centre. This initiative is an excellent example of empowerment that the learners are now experiencing because of the exposure and solidarity they gain from the 6 month long course.

ii. Psychological dimension; Self-efficacy

The focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews both showed that the women experienced an increase in confidence and their ability to interact with different groups of people they might not have been comfortable in interacting with before.

Parveen is one of the most active learners at the ALNS centre in Sardari Shar (UC Tootak). She shared her story of how, while visiting Army Public School in Quetta to attend a school ceremony, she was asked to write her comments about her experience in a register. She was unable to do this because she didn’t know how to read or write at the time. This happened seven years ago and the interaction, she labels as humiliating, continued to bother. However, she was motivated to gain an education and found the perfect opportunity when her Community Institution informed her of the ALNS intervention. Parveen remembers her struggle and is overjoyed to have taken action to change her situation and empower herself through education.

45-year-old Hoor Jan from Killi Yar Muhammad is the President of CO Gulab. She has not had any formal education in the past, nor has she ever taken Quran lessons as some of her peers in the community have. She shared that she had gained confidence from attending the ALNS classes and wanted to present her learning at the annual LSO Convention held by RSPN.

Zahida, 20, from Shoal Abad, UC Baghbana 1 shared that she had an especially good time at the ALNS Centre. She said “bajee (sister) Saeeda (the teacher) has given me the courage to talk in a gathering. I no longer want to be silent, I will either answer or say I don’t know the answer.”

iii. Social Dimension

There is also a language aspect to the ALNS Programme. A majority of the population in Khuzdar district speaks Brahvi, Sindhi, Balochi and Urdu. According to the District and Session Court of Khuzdar [7] over 95% of the districts population speaks Brahui. A majority of the remaining population speaks Balochi. The ability to speak and understand the national language, Urdu, which is spoken in urban centres, can be a gendered issue. Compared to the women, a larger number of men in rural Khuzdar know Urdu because of their increased mobility, their interaction with doctors, their employers and their overall higher levels of education. The ALNS Centres are contributing to mitigating this issue by teaching the learners Urdu and encouraging them to practice speaking it as well. This gives them access to a lot of information (available through newspapers, television etc.) as well as the ability to interact with important service-providers like doctors and teachers living in the urban centres or in other districts.

Many of the learners in Shoal Abad were hesitant to speak to the team in Urdu, even if they had some command over the language and were repeatedly encouraged to it. One of the few learners
who volunteered information in Urdu informed the team that the teacher of the ALNS centre did in fact encourage the learners to speak in Urdu during class. There is a need to further strengthen this aspect of the ALNS Centres.

**iv. Political Dimension**

The Focus Group Discussions showed that women felt they had improved control over their children’s future, an increased ability to get employed and increased confidence levels.

Saeeda from Killi Yar Muhammad (UC Abi Noghay) said that the members of her household resisted her joining the ALNS course. They said it was not an age-appropriate activity for a woman of her age and she should instead stay at home to care for the children. To convince her husband and in-laws to allow her to join the course, Saeeda invited the teacher, Saba, to her house so she could tell them about the course and its benefits. The duo was successful in convincing Saeeda’s household members; she has now graduated from the ALNS course. Saeeda now helps her son, studying in grade one, with his school work. This example also highlights the need for the ALNS intervention to be truly local; had the teacher for the ALNS centre been an outsider, perhaps Saeeda’s family would not have been as trusting of her and allowed Saeeda to join the course.

A respondent in Sardari Shar too expressed how her husband disapproved of her joining the ALNS Centre; he said she was too old to be starting her education journey now. However, the respondent was not discouraged by these comments and continued attending the classes and excelling at the course.

Quotes, anecdotes and self-reported data from all three ALNS centres suggest that the learners feel they have gained in terms of empowerment (for all four dimensions) from the ALNS Training Programme. The exception to this is a participant in UC Baghbana 1 who stated that she does not believe she has decision-making power (political empowerment) in her household or community. She is unable to influence how and where her children should study and that decision is still primarily in the hands of her husband. However, the majority of data pointed to improved empowerment.

**Men’s Perspectives on ALNS Centres**

Interviews of male key informants in the three Union Councils, i.e. Abi Noghay, Baghbana 1 and Tootak, were conducted to explore their perspectives on, women’s literacy in general and on the ALNS training in particular.

A majority of the men informants fell in the age category 25-35 and most have their mother learning in the ALNS Centres. Only two informants were the family heads i.e. a father and a husband of a learner. The findings of this
section are based on the interviews with these key informants.

The respondents showed an overall positive attitude towards women acquiring basic literacy skills through ALNS Programme and their education in general. Most of the men asserted that the basic Literacy Programme benefits the “community as whole” as it provides “the possibility of educating their children, helping their children do their homework, nurturing their children to be well-mannered.”

They also shared how the ALNS training affected their household chores and how the men learned to share responsibilities at home and on farms.

In UC Baghbana 1, the ALNS training participants’ sons and nephews described the ALNS training to be an opportunity for women to get education and they found it beneficial. They reported how they supported their mothers in attending their classes regularly.

32-year-old Ali Gohar, said, “The Training Programme has changed perceptions of the male community about women’s education. The timing of the ALNS class clashed with our afternoon tea time, and the time to collect fodder for the animals and milk the cows. However, we still helped and supported our female family members because if our women are educated, they can support the education of children and spend more time focusing on the wellbeing of children and family.”

Muhammad Waris, 32, shared that “I have observed positive changes in the behaviour of the women, they have learned the skill of saving money and learned to check the expiry dates of medicine, pay attention to children’s vaccination and dates and learned about health and hygiene”.

Muhammad Ismail, 20, whose aunt attended the six-month course said, “I must say that everyone should send their female [relatives] to get educated as it is essential for them and it brings positive changes in the lives of the learners as well as their families”. The learners are now in a position to assist their children with their homework and have informed discussions with teachers.

Similarly, in UC Tootak, men were observed supporting the ALNS training. All of the respondents in the UC asserted that the training is beneficial for women and their families.

Junaid Ahmed, 33, found ALNS training to be a “learning and knowledgeable opportunity for community women...”. He said “women’s education is important to bring a positive change in a community; as the trainers are women so people have no hesitation in getting their female [relatives] enrolled” Hasnain Arif, 19, observed that “slowly and gradually, you can see that these women are improving the quality of life of their families through better hygiene practices and knowledge”. He mentioned that there was a lack of a proper space for the centres.

Shah Zaman, 18, said, “Women’s education and basic literacy is a must for them because it can enable them to improve their economic conditions. If we have more opportunities like the ALNS for our female relatives, we will encourage them to avail them.” He found his mother to be more
punctual in vaccinating his siblings against polio. “In today’s world we need more educated women,” he added. “Initially, we did not help our mothers. We found a change in her behavior after attending the centre, now we not only support her in doing her homework but also in doing the household chores.”

Likewise, in UC Abi Noghay, the respondents reported an overall positive attitude towards women’s education and found ALNS Training to be an opportunity for the rural women to learn basic reading and writing skills. They also talked about how the leaners’ family members cope with the new routines of the women who start attending the ALNS course.

Abdul Ghani, 52, supports women’s education saying, “Women’s education is important for a community’s development. We want our daughters to get an education.” Talking about the ALNS Training, he narrated, “She [sister-in-law] left the children at home and the children were not comfortable without their mother.” However, “she learned about their health and also improved the overall sanitation at home…we are supporting and encouraging women to go out and avail more opportunities like this.”

Adul Nabi, 60, found the training to be a “learning, skill giving and knowledge opportunity for the women who were illiterate. Women must get an education and we want our female relatives to get educated and get more women enrolled. We don’t have schools and resources for education.” He added that his wife learned about health and hygiene. “She has improved her bargaining skills; as she can bargain with shopkeepers and she can read prices of items.”

The interviews held with the male family members of the participants concluded that ALNS is playing a significant role in women’s family lives, socioeconomic activities and their role in community development. Before the Programme women were not as active in their family life, socioeconomic activities and community development work. The Programme enabled them to improve their family life in terms of assisting their children in school work, better home and child management, maintaining good relationships with children and husband, better care of children’s health, financial support to families, and checking of utility bills.

Challenges

Challenges faced by the district team

Teacher identification was the first challenge reported by both BRSP, BRACE district teams and at BRSP head office. The criteria for teacher selection was that the candidate must have an intermediate level of education. However, finding a woman candidate was not possible in the rural with intermediate level of education settlements or at UC level. To mitigate the challenge, the BRSP team searched for women candidates with at least a matriculate or middle level education and to train them. In some UCs, the Programme team found that the UCs do not have a single woman with middle level of education. In this case, teachers were selected from another Union Council.
**Challenges faced by the teachers**

The teachers in all three ALNS Centres were happy to not only contribute to their own socio economic empowerment, but also help their fellow community members though literacy.

The ALNS Centre is set up in a space voluntarily given for the purpose, by a community member. The RSP field team ensures that the space is accessible for all learners and the teacher. Often the centres are established in the house of the teacher (as was the case with the centres visited by the team). However, some male informants said, the physical space for the centre is not always easily available. Nonetheless, this issue is quickly resolved within the community.

**Challenges for students**

Despite the fact that the ALNS Centres are established within an easily accessible distance for all learners, some learners faced mobility issues. A respondent from UC Baghbana 1 shared that though she was expected to walk long distances to collect wood for the house, an activity that takes her up to four hours a day, her husband did not approve her going to the ALNS Centre, which is relatively closer. Furthermore, many household members continue to discourage the learners from taking this initiative to improve and empower themselves. To tackle this, the study has recommended that the men of these households who are also members of the CIs, be sensitised on these issues by BRSP staff.

**Challenges faced by the CRPs**

The CRPs are essential to the success of the Programme and the ALNS intervention. Two CRPs in UC Tootak shared the registers they had been keeping for the ALNS, which were accurate and regularly updated. The CRPs check the ALNS Centres for attendance, availability of teaching amenities like the white-board and a general check-in with the participant regarding the progress of their learning, on a bi-monthly basis. They then send this information via the phone (WhatsApp groups, etc.) to the SOs in RSPs. This chain of communication is integral to the smooth running of the Training Programme. However, the CRPs shared that they struggled with their mobility. The two CRPs from Tootak would travel to the centres together, so that they feel safer. However, their honorarium was not enough to cover the transportation cost.

**Limitations**

**Time Limitation:** Collecting primary data through focus groups and key informant interviews proved effective in deepening our understanding of the Programme’s benefits, but was time-limited. We were able to engage with only three ALNS Learning Centres and 38 key informants.

However, the tight timeline and the COVID19 lockdown prevented us from using a bigger sample size.
COVID-19 Lockdown: The Participatory Action Research under BRACE Programme has used ethnicity, ecology and an overall district profile based upon its socio-demographic indicators to divide BRACE Programme districts in Balochistan into three main clusters. The North cluster comprises Killa Abdullah, Pishin, Zhob and Loralai, East cluster covers Jhal Magsi and Khuzdar and, South cluster covers Washuk and Kech. Initially the study was to cover one district from the North cluster and another district from the East cluster (given the maturity and number of ALNS centres were similar in these two clusters, but not for the South cluster) For this the team had selected Khuzdar and Loralai according to the availability of beneficiaries and maturity of ALNS Programmes. However, the team was only able to visit Khuzdar before the nation-wide lockdown due to coronavirus pandemic, ensued. This prevented the team from incorporating findings from an area with relatively different cultural and educational conditions.

Conclusion

This study has explained and illustrated the importance of the concept of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills in helping illiterate, rural women. It clearly pointed to the benefits of basic literacy skills in the development of human capital (in terms of health outcome and education outcome) and the economic and social empowerment of women (cognitive, economic, social and psychological). The Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills Training Programme was found to be effective in the following ways:

1. The realisation of socioeconomic benefits through learning and the learners’ increased levels of confidence was evident. It was worth noting that all women were now looking forward to be engaged in income generating activities, with some expecting to be employed. Many, who felt hesitant about their husbands’ permission for them to attend upcoming TVET and Enterprise Development Training for IGGs in an outside village, were found motivated to learn from their peers who were likely to get permission and would go on to pursue the TVET and IGG training opportunities under the BRACE Programme. The ALNS Course instilled in them a resilience and confidence to learn from whatever source is available.

2. The process of drawing on and building good relationships among the learners and with the teacher are intrinsic to the learning process. The respondents found the local teachers of a similar cultural background, a reason for continuing the course. The teacher-learner relationship and the social capital formed as a result of enhanced trust levels contributed to their enhanced motivation to continue with the learning process.
3. The study concluded that the women experienced empowerment, an increased ability to participate in their social environment and affect the political system; this was seen in their efforts to learn Urdu, a new language, in their newfound ability to teach their children and their ability to envision a bright future for themselves as well as their children and family. The ALNS Training Programme increased their self-efficacy and allowed them access to informal practices such as savings (committee system). Furthermore, it enabled some of them to partake in decisions related to themselves as well as their children.

4. Employing the idea of literacy as a skill as well as an ability to accomplish tasks in daily life, the study concludes that the learners were not only getting an educational experience, that they had been deprived of in the past, but the Programme was also positively influencing the lives of young girls who still have a chance of joining the formal education systems after getting a head-start through the Centre. The ALNS Training Programme is for 18-45 year olds, however, the RSPs have shown leniency by accepting learners younger than 18 years; this allows young girls the opportunity to be mainstreamed into formal education after getting a grade three through the ALNS Training Programme.

5. The integrated nature of BRACE distinguishes it from other women’s adult literacy numeracy programmes as it is supported by a social mobilisation component and other integrated interventions. Community Institutions provide a platform for local women to meet and discuss their issues and potentials; they are able to undertake planning in the form of Micro Investment Plans and plan for the economic improvement in their lives and those of their household. Based in these plans, eligible households receive IGG, CIF and/or TVET programmes. This is how community members participate in local development. The literacy component complements and is complemented by the integrated interventions of BRACE. Learners at ALNS centres, being members of COs/VOs/LSOs, are now better able to make informed decisions within their COs e.g. those related to local development plans at the level of the CO, VO and LSO. Being aware about many social issues through monthly CAT sessions and ALNS sessions, women are now able to articulate their views and demands in their CO meetings and take decisions more confidently. Through the CIs they can request help and support to further their educational journey or translate it into economic success. This is done by connecting the ALNS beneficiaries to TVET, IGG and CIF.
6. Even though the ALNS Programme is seen to bring about multiple positive behavioural changes in the lives of the learners and their family members, there is no evidence to support that this six-month long course is necessarily able to equip all learners with the literacy level of keeping CI records.

**Recommendations**

**Men’s sensitisation on women education**

Some participants reported how their husbands and household members had not been supportive of their decision to join the ALNS Training Programme. A respondent in Sardari Shar and one from Killi Yar Muhammad stated that their husbands thought that they were too old to start their educational journey. Another respondent from Shoal Abad said her mobility was limited by her husband who was distrustful of the Programme’s activities. These women are fighting many battles to come to the ALNS Centres and take charge of this part of their life. They can be aided in this battle by sensitising the male members of the households through CO, VO and LSO meetings. It was interesting to observe that male children of the participants’ had a positive attitude towards women’s literacy and education in general. However, older family members, especially husbands, need to be sensitised about women’s rights.

**Systematically documenting lessons learnt from each cycle of ALNS**

Discussions with the BRSP district team and field staff informed the research team that the BRSP has initiated two rounds of the ALNS Trainings; nine Centres established from February to August 2019 and 20 Centres set up in December 2019. The district will initiate 51 more centres in the near future. When asked if the district team had gained some insights from the first round that they incorporated into the second round of establishing ALNS Centres, they said they are now studies/insights or observations to share. The research team recommends that the district team formalise this procedure of noting lessons learnt from each round of this important intervention. This data can be collected from the teachers, learners, LSO leaders, CRPs and SOs of the RSP; these stakeholders have a plethora of rich and relevant knowledge that can be put to good use in improving the upcoming round of ALNS intervention.

**Celebrating graduation/ giving awards to toppers**
The learners in all three UCs seemed delighted to receive the team and happily showed their notebooks, sketches of their family trees, their reading skills and neat hand writing. The field staff also stressed how encouragement and positive reinforcement are the tenets of the ALNS intervention. One of the learners, 45-years-old Parveen, from Sardari Shar, UC Tootak expressed her desire to have a graduation ceremony where she would receive her certificate. Discussions with the district team as well as the team at the BRSP headquarters ensured that this recommendation was agreed upon across the board. If budget allows it, learners could be celebrated on the day they get their certificates, at the LSO level. District Social Mobilisation Teams (women) and Women Councillors in the Union Council could also be invited to this occasion, to encourage the learners, build their future networks and make them feel proud.

**Strengthening links between Community Institutions and ALNS Centres**

Some probing around the learners’ interaction with fellow members of COs and VOs, and their frequency of attending the meetings showed that many learners were not very clear about the functions of their CIs. This was especially the case in areas where social mobilisation was either very recent or lacking (for example in Shoal Abad, UC Bagh bana 1). To encourage stronger linkages between the ALNS intervention and the CIs, it is suggested that during and towards the end of the course, the presidents and managers of COs and VOs visit the Centres to inform the learners of other opportunities they can avail of through the BRACE Programme, to continue their learning (e.g. TVET), prospects of employment (e.g. book-keeping for CIs, CRP positions and other opportunities outside of the Programme), etc. They can also encourage each batch of learners to continue meeting once a month so they can motivate each other to keep revising and maintaining their learning.

**Need to explore the relationship, possibilities and links between ALNS intervention and TVET intervention**

Multiple respondents in the active ALNS Centre in Tootak said that they wanted to learn how to stitch clothes through the TVET intervention. Their new found confidence and willingness to bring about a change in their lives must be harnessed in a timely manner. The learners of Tootak had a good grasp of numeracy e.g. measurements, they could also read and write words related to tailoring. This enables them to be ideal candidates for the tailoring courses in the
TVET intervention. There is a need to further explore this relationship and integration between various BRACE interventions. This also suggested that the two interventions be scheduled in a way that one follows another and the candidates are able to benefit from both.

References


Annex-i: District Profile-Khuzdar