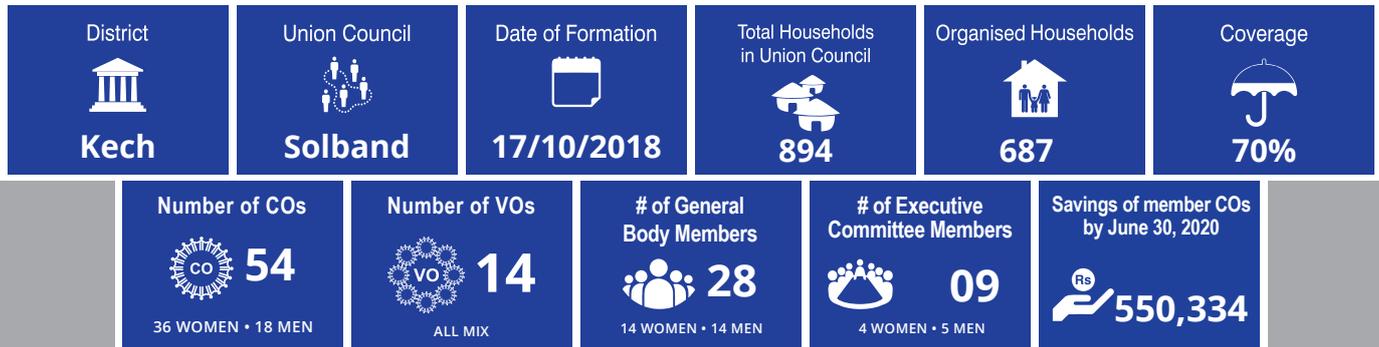




LSOs or Local Support Organisations are central to the 'Social Mobilisation' approach of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs). In a bid to reduce poverty and empower marginalised people (especially women), the RSPs under BRACE, mobilise rural women and men into a three-tiered structure, which consists of Community Organisations (COs) - neighbourhood level community groups, Village Organisations (VOs) - village level federations of COs, and LSOs - union council level federations of VOs. LSOs are able to carry out community-led development at a much greater level due to the advantage they gain from numbers. As the tertiary tier, LSOs are also uniquely able to develop linkages with government and non-government organisations, donor agencies and the private sector.

LSO INITIATIVES

Shoorma Local Support Organisation



LSO Shoorma, from District Kech, was formed on October 17th, 2018, by 894 member households organised into 54 COs and 14 VOs. The men and women leaders of LSO Shoorma are planning and implementing development activities both on a self-help basis as well as in collaboration with government agencies. The EU-funded BRACE programme is empowering rural men and women in Balochistan through realising the power they gain through collective action. Organised men and women are now gaining awareness about their rights, holding the service providers accountable, and also taking initiatives to improve their lives.

Preventive Measures to Contain Spread of COVID-19

The outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) disease in 2019 has created a global health crisis. Pakistan was one of the many countries hit by the virus; the Government imposed lockdown all over the country to contain the spread of the virus. The leaders of the LSO Shoorma identified lack of awareness as the most pressing issue posed by the pandemic; there was a need to make community members aware of how the virus is transmitted from carriers to healthy persons. Therefore, the LSO leaders advised the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) to share the SOPs announced by the Government during their Community Awareness Toolkits (CAT) sessions. The CRPs informed the CO members on avoiding crowded places like markets, mosques and social gatherings; practicing social distancing; washing hands with soap frequently and wearing face masks etc. So far, the CRPs have provided awareness sessions on COVID-19 to 693 community members.

Moreover, the LSO leaders distributed 150 pamphlets and brochures amongst community members, expanding on safeguarding measures against COVID-19. They displayed 61 banners and posters in public places across the UC. They sent 867 messages on taking precautionary measures against COVID-19 to their fellow community members, made announcement in four mosques, and distributed face masks among their poorest members. As a result of these efforts, the awareness about COVID-19 was spread efficiently across the local community which helped them adopt precautionary measures suggested by the Government.

The LSO leaders also realised that due to the lockdown, a significant number of poor households had lost their sources of livelihood and they were unable to provide basic food items to their family members. To counter this, the LSO leaders helped register 600 such poor families under the Governments' EHSAAAS Emergency Cash Programme. Out of 600, 310 families received PKR 12,000 per family. The total amount received by these families amounts to PKR 3,720,000.



A CRP conducting awareness session on COVID-19 in a CO meeting

Construction of Protective Bund with MPA Funds

During the rainy seasons, flash floods lead to massive destruction in the downstream villages of UC Solband. The floods destroy farm fields as well as residential houses of the villagers. Therefore, the community not only loses their standing crops but also becomes shelter less. A flood protection bund is a viable solution to safeguard the villages from the floods. Therefore, the LSO approached Mr. Akbar Askani, the local MPA to allocate funds for construction of a flood barrier at village Nizar Muham. He provided PKR 10 million for construction of a 1,950 ft long protective work project. The project was implemented by the Government Public Works Department. A total of 75 families benefited from the protective barrier and feel safer.

Activities to Promote Education

The CRPs disseminated information on the importance of education in terms of personal growth as well as its economic benefits, through the Community Awareness Toolkits (CAT) under the EU supported BRACE Programme, the LSO leaders started thinking of ways to promote education in their UC. Their brainstorming led them to take initiatives to ensure that most of the out of school children from the UC were enrolled into schools. To realise this, they collected information about out-of-school children through their VOs across the UC. They motivated the parents of the out-of-school children to enrol their children into schools and met the school head teacher to ensure that the enrolment was done as required. So far, they have successfully enrolled 110 out-of-school children, including 70 girls and 40 boys, in Government schools.

The LSO leaders observed that the shortage of classrooms was hampering their efforts to enrol maximum number of children in the local High school. The LSO leaders submitted an application to the Government Education Department for construction of two additional classrooms in the High School. On their request, the Education Department constructed two classrooms in the High School that helped in reducing the overcrowding in the classrooms; this will ultimately improve the quality of education.

The Global Fund is an international organisation designed to promote innovative solutions to global health challenges. The LSO coordinated with the Global Fund, and offered their support in implementing projects in their UC. Global Fund offered to establish a garden and playground in a local school at village Balochabad Ward. The LSO identified the Girls' Primary

School in the UC and submitted their recommendation to Global Fund. The Global Fund provided their financial and technical assistance in implementing the project. The project has significantly improved both the aesthetic and environmental value of the Girls' school as school playgrounds play an important role in the daily life of students, fulfilling their developmental and learning needs.

Plantation of Trees

Kech is a desert area with a minimum forest cover. The weather in summer is extremely hot. During the CAT sessions, the organised community leaders learnt about the benefits of tree plantation. These benefits include the positive effect of tree plantation on the area's temperature, their usage as fodder for domestic animals, and income generation through plantation of fruit trees. Motivated by this knowledge, the LSO leaders decided to plant trees in their court yards, empty spaces in the village, and in Government Schools. They, therefore, requested the Government Forest Department for a supply of rooted tree saplings. The Forest Department issued 250 rooted trees to the LSO, free of cost. The LSO distributed these plants among CO members through their relevant VOs and the CO members planted the trees. In addition to that, the CO members also planted 750 trees with their own resources in their courtyards and Government Schools. On the whole, they planted 1,000 trees across the UC.



Tree Plantation in Government Girls' School by the LSO leaders



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