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**

**Local Support Organisation New Umeed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Union Council</th>
<th>Date of Formation</th>
<th>Total Households in Union Council</th>
<th>Organised Households</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Killa Abdullah</td>
<td>Purana Chaman</td>
<td>17-01-2020</td>
<td>2,465</td>
<td>1,852</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LSO New Umeed, from District Killa Abdullah, was formed on January 17th, 2020 by 1,852 member households organised into 186 COs and 59 VOs. The leaders of LSO New Umeed 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 from collective action. Organised men and women are now gaining awareness about their rights, making the service providers accountable, and also taking initiatives to improve their lives.

**Support to Government to Control COVID-19 Pandemic**

When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit the country during the months of April and May, both the Federal and Provincial Governments initiated nation-wide preventive programmes. The Federal Government set up National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to synergise and unify national efforts against COVID-19. On the request of NCOC, RSPN and its member RSPs joined hand with them and actively involved LSOs and their member VO and COs in combating the COVID-19. The programme is happening in 1,500 union councils of 66 districts, in all provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. Seven RSPs, including BRSP have signed MOUs with district administrations, as a public service, linking LSOs with the government to battle COVID-19. The Health Department is training community activists (women and men) on awareness about COVID-19 related preventive measures and Trace Test & Quarantine (TTQ) activities.

LSO New Umeed is also a part of this programme. After receiving training from BRSP and Health Department, they implemented the following activities:

1. They included the Government SOPs on COVID-19 in the Community Awareness Toolkits (CATs) and the CRPs delivered awareness sessions on COVID-19 in the CO meetings as part of their routine sessions. So far, the CRPs have delivered 90 sessions in as many COs.
2. The LSO and VO leaders made announcement frequently from twelve local mosques on following COVID-19 SOPs and raised the awareness of the general masses.
3. They traced eight suspected cases and referred them to District Health Office for COVID-19 test. Fortunately, the results of all eight cases were negative.
4. They received 250 sanitisers and 1,200 face masks from the District Health Office and distributed them among poor families.
5. They helped register 120 eligible families in EHSAAS Cash Grant Programme. All these families received PKR 12,000 each from the Government.
Rehabilitation of Karizes and Construction of Lined Channels for Irrigation through linkages with Local MPA and Government Irrigation Department

Farming is the main source of livelihood for the residents of villages Landi and Murda. They grow vegetables to sell them in the market. The source of water for both for farming and drinking is kariz. A kariz is a gently sloping underground channel to transport water from an aquifer or water well to the surface for irrigation and drinking, acting as an underground aqueduct. The kariz is a reliable supply of water for human settlements and irrigation in hot, arid and semi-arid climates. However, the value of this system is directly related to the quality, volume and regularity of the water flow. Therefore, kariz requires clearing of sand and mud stored gradually in the channel which block the flow of water. The cleaning of kariz can only be done by local experts, and the cost paid to them is quite high.

The karizes of village Landi and Murda had not been cleared for years; consequently, the flow of water had reduced to a minimum in the water channels. The open water channels were not properly built either, and since they were mud channels, a significant quantity of water was lost to seepage. They required proper construction and cement lining. Therefore, the people of both villages were facing acute shortage of water for farming vegetables.

Using their collective voice created by their organisation in COs, VOs and LSO, under the EU funded BRACE Programme, the LSO leaders decided to meet Mr. Asghar Khan Achakzai, Member Provincial Assembly (MPA), to seek financial support from the Government both for clearing the karizes and lining the water channels. They briefed the MPA on their water-related issues and requested him to allocate funds for clearing the karizes of villages Landi and Murda as well as lining their irrigation channels, from his discretionary funds. The MPA listened to them patiently and assured them for provision of funds for both projects. The MPA provided funds to the Irrigation Department and the Irrigation Department rehabilitated 900 ft. long kariz of village Landi and 1,500 ft. long kariz of village Murda. In addition, the Irrigation Department widened and lined 1,200 ft. irrigation channel of village Landi and 1,800 ft. channel of village Murda in close coordination and support of the LSO members over a short period of four months. Now the 270 farming families of village Landi and 600 farming households of village Murda are enjoying sufficient water both for farming and drinking purposes. The production of vegetables has increased significantly in both villages, resulting in economic prosperity and psychological peace and tranquility of their residents.

Construction of Water Supply Projects through linkages with Local Government and MPA

The 200 families residing in villages Pado Kariz and Tozi Kariz were facing drinking water issues. The source of water was quite far away from their houses, therefore, women had to fetch water in jerricans and buckets on foot. Since this was a laborious task, they could not fetch enough water to meet the drinking, cooking and washing needs of their families. Hence, they used to take washing clothes to the irrigation channel and wash and dry them there, which was another painstaking chore for the women of these two villages. A number of relatively well-off families had constructed water tanks in their houses and paid huge price to water tankers to fill water in their tanks. The issue of these two villages was raised at an LSO meeting. The LSO leaders discussed it at length, listed down the requirements for providing drinking water to the people. This included construction of five large and 25 household level small water tanks, and installation of pipelines to provide drinking water to each and every household in these two villages. The cost of the project was significant, and well beyond the capacity of the villagers. Therefore, the LSO leaders decided to send in an application to the Public Health Department requesting them to fund the project. The Public Health Department accepted their application, allocated funds and constructed the water supply.
through a contractor. The LSO leaders monitored the work of the contractor and also supported him in times of need. The project was completed in time and the quality of the work was also satisfactory. The project has significantly reduced the work load of the women and improved the health and hygiene conditions of the 200 families of the two villages. The local community is very happy with the LSO leaders and thankful to their sincere efforts for arranging safe drinking water at their household level.

Prepared CNIC of Community Members in collaboration with NADRA

Due to long distances, travelling to NADRA office for preparation of Computerised National Identity Cards (CNIC) for the LSO members living in far off villages is both a time consuming and expensive task. They have to bear costs for travel and boarding and lodging. It becomes more costly for women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), as they needed a male relative to accompany them. Therefore, a large number of women and PWDs in the villages, do not have their CNICs. The matter was brought up at the LSO meeting. To remedy this, the LSO leaders decided to call the NADRA mobile van to their villages. The VO leaders of the concerned villages prepared a list of the women, men and PWDs without CNICs in their village, and submitted it with an application to NADRA office requesting the services of their mobile van to their respective villages. On their request, NADRA sent its mobile van to the designated villages. On the advice of the LSO leaders, the VO leaders and the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) guided and helped the community members prepare their required documents beforehand, so that the NADRA team could prepare CNICs of the people easily and efficiently. So far, NADRA has sent its mobile van to five villages and prepared CNICs of 200 people, including 140 women and 60 men. The activity is under progress and the LSO leaders are determined to arrange the NADRA mobile van service for all villages in their UC.
Providing Solar Panels and Solar Fans with the help of MPA and Local Government

Due to frequent load shedding and low voltage of electricity supply in the rural areas of the UC, people not only had to suffer through sleepless nights and unbearable days because of high temperatures in the area, but they were also unable to operate electronic instruments and machines nor recharge their mobile sets. The matter was discussed at the LSO meeting and the members decided to opt for solar energy. The LSO leaders then met with their MPA and Local Government Authorities and requested them to provide solar panels and solar fans to the most affected villages of their UC. As a result of their sincere efforts and the advice of the MPA, the Local Government Authorities provided 560 solar panels and 280 solar fans to 280 community members. Now these community members are enjoying uninterrupted electricity supply round the clock.

They now operate fans, water pumps, irons and other electric devices at the day time and use the stored solar energy in the panels at night time for lighting and running fans. The life style of the beneficiary families has improved significantly due to the availability of electricity.