

Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

NEWSLETTER

Issue 7 | Apr - Jun 2020



There is a profound relationship between national identity documents and poverty



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FOR THE BRACE'S GRANT COMPONENT



PROGRAMME TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNER



There is a profound relationship between national Identity documents and poverty



A sizeable population of the rural poor in Balochistan has no formal identification or registration documents. This disenfranchises them and leaves them unable to access their social, financial and political rights. Documents like the national identity card, child birth registration, marriage registration and voter registration not only authenticate an individual's identity, they also help governments make informed decisions and execute evidence-based strategic development plans.

The lack of data may help explain why the 2020 SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) report ranked Pakistan 134 out of a total of 166 countries. Despite its efforts, Pakistan failed to perform well against its SDGs and was marked red. This means that “major challenges remain” which are “moderately increasing”.

Balochistan has been disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of development and governance over the past few decades. Over 50% of its residents live below the poverty line. Against this background, it is all the more important for the government to increase its efforts to include all residents of Balochistan in the national citizen's database, thereby enabling them to access more facilities and services; and enabling the state to provide targeted relief and development policies.

Covid-19 has underlined the need for better data

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the need for an updated national database more pressing than ever. Without access to good demographic information, the state is unable to make informed decisions relating to the healthcare and safety of its nationals. Nor is it able to execute inclusive plans and interventions.

The BRACE project is helping increase registration

Strong institutions, which are accessible to citizens, help ensure they are aware of their civil and political rights.

The EU-funded BRACE Programme is helping mobilise and capacitate local communities in nine districts of Balochistan to form their own community institutions, from settlement to Union Council and district levels. The community institutions fostered under the BRACE Programme help organise the locals, amplify their voices and execute focused and tailored interventions.

The local leaders of the community institutions understand the importance and urgent need to register rural populations and help them secure (Computerised National Identity Card) CNICs, birth and marriage registration and voter registrations.

With this in mind, the community institutions in nine districts under the BRACE Programme have helped 15,107 individuals secure CNICs (51% of which are women). Through awareness raising sessions on civil rights, they have also facilitated the acquisition of 2,774 child birth certificates and B Forms, and 373 to register their marriages with the local designated departments.

Furthermore, to ensure that the rural populations are represented in the country's democratic process BRSP and NRSP have helped almost 20,000 people register to vote (50% of which were women)

By entrusting the local community institutions to lead the process of registering citizens in the national database, the government will also benefit by being able to better reach out to 300,000 households in Balochistan and to develop policies to better achieve their sustainable development goals.

According to World Bank indicators, only 42.2% of births are registered with civil authorities in Pakistan (33.6 % in rural areas compared to 60.3% in urban areas). Only 39.7% of the population under 18 in Balochistan is registered with the NADRA and has a Child Registration Certificate.

For those over 18, a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) is required to procure any official document such as a passport or a driver's license, to gain admission to schools, to obtain a government job, to buy a mobile phone and register the number, to access financial services including social services and grants, or to vote.

One in five adults in Pakistan currently do not have a CNIC (18% of the population of Balochistan).

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, there is a total of 105.9 million registered voters (44% women) of which 4.3 million (42% women) in Balochistan. There is a dearth of data about the missing voters. Some studies suggest that there are at least 10 million missing women in the current electoral roll.

Local customs disadvantage women, resulting in inter-generational poverty

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that results in deprivation at many levels – such as poor health, inadequate living standards, lack of education, and lack of income. In Balochistan, social and cultural customs restrict women's access to work, education, inheritance and productive assets. Thus, women in rural Balochistan are entirely dependent on their husbands and male family members. In cases where women are the heads of households, there is a great risk of poverty.

According to the poverty score card, there are over three thousand women headed households in 9 target districts of BRACE Programme i.e. Jhal Magsi, Khuzdar, Washuk, Killa Abdullah, Pishin, Loralai, Zhob, Duki and Kech.

Because of their impoverished conditions, the BRACE Programme prioritises their empowerment through interventions like assistance in the form of Income Generating Grants (IGGs) or CIF (Community Investment Fund) to start small scale businesses to provide regular income for the household.



BRACE is also providing very targeted support



Haneefa, from Shakal village in union council Basima, district Washuk, is a 55-year-old widow living with her only son who is also unemployed. After the demise of her husband, Haneefa survived off of loans from her neighbours and relatives and when her assets were surveyed, she scored just 13 out of 100, which falls in the ultra-poor category. This qualified her for an Income Generating Grant which she used to set up a tuck shop in her house. The BRACE Programme also sent her to an Enterprise Development Training to learn how to manage and sustain her newly established business. The grant amounted to PKR 55 000, which she used to buy stock for her enterprise. Today Haneefa earns PKR 8500 a month to support her family and has successfully repaid a debt of PKR 30,000.

BRACE Programme supports National Test Trace and Quarantine (TTQ) Strategy to respond the COVID-19 emergency

The National Control and Command Center (NCC) devised a comprehensive Test Trace and Quarantine Strategy (TTQ) to control the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. Bearing in mind the huge geographical footprint of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) across the country, the Government decided on rural areas to collaborate with them to establish Pakistan's first, organised community-led response to the COVID-19 emergency. A public-private partnership has been established between the GOP and the Local Support Organisations (LSOs) established by the RSPs (LSOs are community institutions that operate at the union council level). Seven RSPs have signed MOUs with district administrations to create a link with LSOs from 1,500 union councils to support the government in its efforts. The District Health Department is training the LSO community activists (women and men) on awareness about COVID-19, related preventive measures and contact tracing, and asking them to report suspected cases (TTQ) to the Health Department. About 20 million people will benefit from this collaboration. The BRACE Programme is



playing a collaborative role since project fostered Local Support Organisations in Jhal Magsi, Khuzdar, Killa Abdullah, Loralai, Pishin and Zhob are playing an integral role in raising awareness, encouraging behavior change and de-stigmatising COVID-19 reporting. The prime objective of the TTQ strategy is to ensure effective collaborative management of COVID-19 by identifying clusters / hotspots, enabling smart

lockdowns and optimising the necessary resources at Province, District and Tehsil level. The most striking development is that the government has recognised the organised communities as valid partners for development. Under this TTQ strategy, the LSOs will not only support the government in helping trace and report on COVID-19 cases but also reduce people's fear of being reported and quarantined for treatment.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Strengthening community-based institutions for peace building and conflict resolution



Community organisations have often played a role in peace keeping at community level. In Balochistan, conflicts are usually resolved through community Jirga Assemblies, which have existed across Baloch and Pashtun cultures both in FATA and settled areas to resolve issues and feuds since way before the advent of Islam and the western democratic system. A jirga comprises village elders who address, discuss and resolve issues of importance that

matter to their community. Their decisions are based on consensus in light of Shariah law and local traditions.

This quarter 55 Local Support Organisation offices were set up in 9 BRACE districts. The provision of offices to LSOs is not only facilitating their work, but also enhancing their role as peace keeping institutions.

The executive body of the LSOs are impartial community activists who expedite the resolution of conflicts especially when it comes to community development projects which might be sorely needed but serve only a small number of people. The LSO serve as a neutral body which grants funds to build Community Physical Infrastructure Schemes or disburses Income Generating Grants (IGGs). The LSO also serves as a platform to bring the warring community members together. One such example is LSO Gwarakh in union council Abey Noghay, district Khuzdar. Since its formation and support by BRACE, the LSO has resolved no fewer than 19 major conflicts including fights between relatives over the distribution of land, and cattle damaging neighbouring farms and crops.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Economic Empowerment of Women through Community Investment Fund

The BRACE Programme aims to engage and mainstream marginalised and socially excluded groups particularly women, minorities and persons with special needs. The ultimate goal is to stimulate an average increase in income of 25% amongst targeted poor households. Community Investments can play a pivotal role in the sustainability of Community Institutions. COVID-19 adversely affected the poorest of the poor therefore the BRACE Programme expedited the disbursement of Community Investment Fund payments to 62 Local Support Organisations representing 548 households. A total of PKR 124 million was disbursed to generate economic activity and safeguard the livelihood of the poor. Bibi Zulaikha is one such beneficiary. She started her own tailoring business after taking a loan of PKR 20,000 from her LSO. Zulaikha's husband worked in the nearby fields and was able



to earn only during the harvesting and sowing season. Zulaikha knew how to stitch and just needed a sewing machine and some raw material to start making Balochi traditional dresses for the women in her community. Zulaikha has become a contributing member of the household and is grateful to the BRACE Programme.

LINKAGES BUILDING

BRACE to Support GoB (NCOC) in Fight Against Covid-19 in Khuzdar



The RSP network provided the largest outreach to poor, rural communities, through community organisations. After the Government of Pakistan established a National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) in May 2020 to deal with the COVID-19 emergency, the latter requested the RSP Network's assistance to implement a government strategy aimed at mobilising communities in the fight against COVID-19. RSPs are now actively working on anti-COVID-19 responses with communities in over 1500 union councils in 66 districts across Pakistan. The response activities are ongoing in all provinces in close collaboration with the government authorities. Since the reporting of the first coronavirus case in Balochistan, the BRACE Programme has been supporting the government of Balochistan. District Khuzdar is an example of the 9 districts where BRACE teams, along with the community institutions they foster are actively involved in the efforts to halt the spread of coronavirus. Almost 38,00 community institutions in Khuzdar are part of the government's initiatives, covering 3200 villages/hamlets,

40 UCs and 05 tehsils. The District Khuzdar team has signed an MoU with the local administration to extend their support. BRSP is playing a lead role in District Khuzdar making its human resources available to the District Administration including the Deputy Commissioner, District Health Officers (DHOs) and representatives of WHO and community institutions. Under this MOU a series of coordination meetings have been held at district level, followed by training events on COVID-19 Trace, Test and Quarantine (TTQ) measures to support the district administration and health department. The BRACE staff is also continuously engaged in various mass awareness campaigns including conducting awareness sessions, loudspeaker announcements and mosque announcements in the whole district on how to cope and respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 at local level. BRACE fostered communities have also made and distributed masks, sanitizers, hand washing soaps, banners, brochures, pamphlets, and kits.

JDDC meeting held in Turbat, Kech

The primary objective of the Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) is to serve as a platform for Government and development partners to plan, implement and monitor local development initiatives at district level. JDDC meetings are convened on a quarterly basis with the participation of officials of line departments, elected representatives, community institutions, civil society etc. On 22 April 2020, NRSP facilitated a meeting of JDDC in Turbat, District Kech. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Shay Zahoor Ahmed (Divisional Director, Local Govt. and Rural Development). During the meeting, participants were briefed on the latest COVID-19 developments, its social impact, and the efforts being made under the BRACE Programme to keep the community safe. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on social distancing, just thirteen people attended the meeting including two women.



Two Day Enumerators and Supervisors Training on Android Baseline Survey



A two-day training was held at PIU Turbat for enumerators and supervisors who will conduct a Poverty Scorecard Survey (PSC) to establish the poverty level of households in the targeted communities in the newly added Municipal Corporation areas. The PSC census will be rolled out after the training in the newly added MC areas of district Kech. 17 persons participated in the training. The PSC Survey will be conducted using the standard World Bank poverty scorecard methodology established by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), but it will also include a family roster and 3-4 additional questions related to socio economic conditions. Data will be collected using an android based application designed specifically for this purpose, and each enumerator will have a small tablet Personal Computer (PC). Data will be uploaded in the Management Information System where it will be added to the existing data on the dashboard of the BRACE Management Information System.

Community book keeper training held in Kech

NRSP under BRACE Programme organised a training of book keepers at the Project Implementing Unit (PIU) in Turbat. The training will help the book keepers in managing and updating the LSO financial records, particularly financial transactions relating to income generating grants,



community investment funds and community infrastructure projects. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only a small number of participants were allowed to participate in the training. The skills learned also make it easy for the book keepers to find employment in future.



Awareness on COVID-19 through Community Resource Persons

The Community Resource Persons (CRPs) trained under the EU funded BRACE Programme have been instrumental in raising awareness on COVID-19 among the masses at their regular community sessions. During these, the BRACE CRPs have been discussing in detail personal hygiene and social distancing SOPs with community members, telling them how to maintain social distancing at home and public places, how to keep their families, especially children and elderly, protected from the novel corona virus. The community session organised in all BRACE districts by our CRPs have also helped communities understand that the disease was not a hoax but a harsh reality. At these sessions, for the safety and security of the community members social distancing and all safety measures were ensured.



Emerging outcomes of BRACE Programme's Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills training

A focused, qualitative study in district Khuzdar of Balochistan, Pakistan revealed that the learners of Adult Literacy centres are gaining economic and social empowerment. However, it was found that the typical challenges faced by such literacy programmes can be resolved through the rich social network provided by social mobilisation, amalgamated with other integrated interventions.

Introduction/ Problem

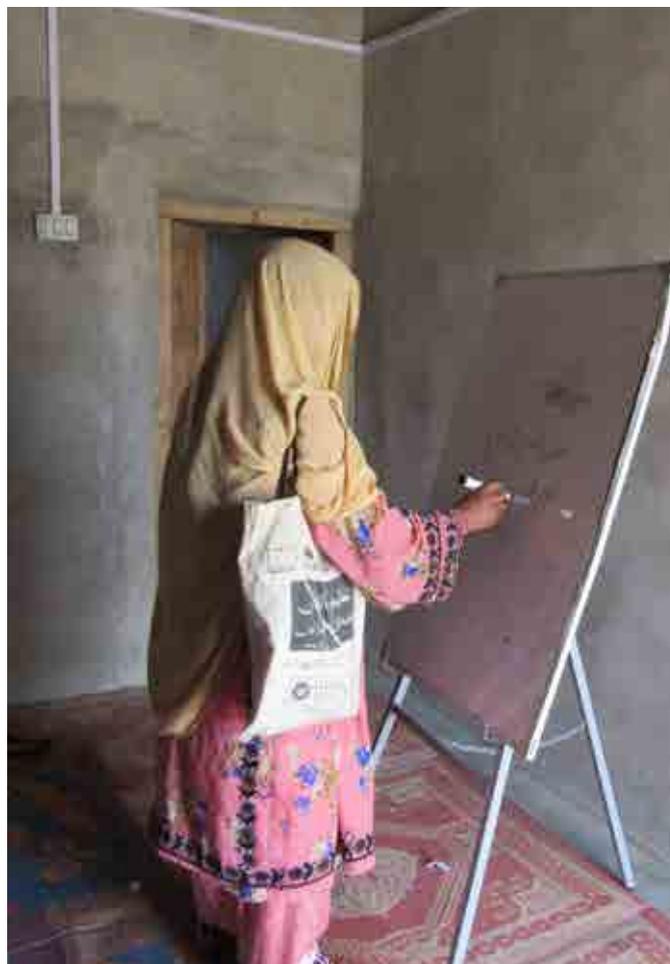
Balochistan covers 47 per cent of the total landmass of Pakistan but is home to only 6 per cent of population which is scattered over the expansive province. A history of negligent governance and continued regional violence has resulted in poor infrastructure and dwarfed human development in the province. Pakistan's current rural literacy rate is 51 per cent while that of Balochistan is 40 per cent with 56% male and 24% female literacy. There is a severe dearth of education institutes in the region and 2.3 million children out of 3.6, are out of school. This lack of literacy goes hand in hand with the gender disparity in Pakistan.

Pakistan has had a series of governance periods with different policies, addressing the dearth of adult literacy in Pakistan, starting at the very inception of the country in 1947. Since then, Pakistan has built adult literacy centres; suggested that school-going children be involved in teaching their parents, who lack literacy; broadcasting literacy lessons on TV and radio; merging religious education with functional education; initiated literacy centres for prisoners, etc. These policies have not greatly helped curb the literacy crisis at hand, especially for the citizens of Balochistan who are often left out of these nationwide education interventions. The current government, under Prime Minister Imran Khan aims to increase the literacy rate of the country from 58 to 70 per cent.

Evidence based solutions

Women in rural communities of district Khuzdar, Balochistan, are taking ownership of their literacy as well as empowerment by participating in the ALNS intervention under EU-funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme. This Programme is being implemented by Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) in 8 districts, and by National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) in one district with Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) providing technical support.

Under BRACE, RSPs have implemented social mobilisation in nine districts of the province, building a bottom-up, social pillar of citizens and activists; this pillar complements the political and administrative pillars of the country. It is made of three tiers; Community Organisations at the household level, Village Organisations at the village level and Local Support Organisations



at the Union Council level. This expansive network (covering 172,484 households) consisting of local community notables, village elders and activists, helps identify ideal villages and communities for the ALNS centres, locates a qualified, local teacher and helps set up the centre.

This Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ALNS) training is delivered by BRSP, in collaboration with the provincial government. Upon passing the assessment at the end of the six-month long training, the learners are given certifications for literacy and numeracy level of a third grade student.

10,720 women learners (8,440 BRSP and 2,280 NRSP) are expected to participate in the ALNS course during the Programme period (2017-2022) 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. Each centre has around 25 students.

To assess this intervention and analyse the challenges faced by literacy programmes, a brief qualitative study was conducted in the district Khuzdar of Balochistan.



Methodology

A focused, qualitative, research was conducted in three literacy centres of district Khuzdar, to gauge if the woman participants were benefitting from the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skill training. While two centres had completed their six-month long course, one centre was still active. The team conducted a combination of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with 38 learners, one teacher and eleven male relatives of the key informants. The discussion points were run by the local field staff to ensure they were culture-sensitive and appropriate; the staff also helped translate the responses of the participants.

Findings

Out of the three villages visited, the residents of two did not have a public school in their locality. The third village had only gotten access to a public school two-three years ago. This lack of access to formal education institutes has resulted in a large population of adult women and a growing population of young girls, deprived of opportunities to an education. 37 out of 38 learners interviewed for the study had never been enrolled in a school. However, the ALNS training under BRACE has enabled both groups to gain an education and thus enhance their future prospects. A grandmother, daughter and granddaughter trio attended the training in village Killi Yar Muhammad. The granddaughter Asiya, with her grade three certification has enrolled in the nearby local primary school which was built recently.

The respondents in all three centres reported improved confidence in their abilities to partake in income generating activities. Many participants are aiming to use their literacy and numeracy skills

to set up a stitching business while one is aspiring to continue her education to qualify as a teacher in a nearby school. Zahida, the only participant who has previously been to school said she couldn't wait to start earning. She plans on purchasing a gas cylinder for home cooking with her first pay; this way she will not have to walk long distances to collect wood for the stove.

"...The teacher made me understand that if I do not know how to measure the size/length of 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", learner Sughra said.

The respondents didn't just highlight experiences of economic empowerment but also said they were felt psycho-social improvements. The centre in village Sardari Shar has a self-initiated savings programme where women learners contribute PKR 1000 each to help save up. The learners of village Shoal Abad decided to have tea parties every other month to celebrate their new found friendships and enthusiasm for learning. Many respondents noted that now that they can read the expiry dates and vaccination dates on hospital notice boards, they are helping provide a healthy environment at home. The fact that the teacher was selected from within the community, helps win the learner and her family's trust.

"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 quit the class". said Faiz Bibi from Killi Yar Muhammad

Eleven male household members of the learners were also interviewed; 63% of the male relatives interviewed were less than 35 years old and all but two informants had mother-son relationship



with the learners. They reported positive behavioural changes in the learners like improved self-confidence, punctuality, better habits around healthcare, improved childcare, new money saving habits etc. They also shared the ways they assist the learners e.g. by dropping them to the centre and making adjustments at home in their absence etc.

Challenges and Way Forward

The study also highlighted some challenges that the women face while participating in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills trainings.

Contrary to the positive image portrayed by the male respondents, the learners shared that their husbands or in-laws are not always on board with them leaving the house for the duration of the class every day. This can be resolved by introducing gender sensitising training to the men in their monthly CI meetings; if the men of the community were to be encouraged by their elders and village leaders to support their woman relatives in gaining an education, it would help harvest a positive environment for the learners.

There is a need to further support participants of literacy programmes in helping them avail income generating opportunities. As of 2017, 72.5 per cent of the total population of Balochistan lives in rural areas; this means a majority of the population has little access to

infrastructure and employment opportunities. The unemployment rate of the province is an alarming 33.5 per cent. Out of the 220 graduate learners of ALNS Programmes under BRACE, the fathers of 106 are daily wage labourers, 31 rely on farming for their livelihood and 52 are unemployed. In such an economic environment it is essential to help the learners, who have begun their educational journey, avail income generating opportunities. Not only will monetary gain encourage the learners but will also serve as a lesson of resilience and gender empowerment for the younger girls. This can be done by linking the literacy training with the technical and vocational training. EU-funded BRACE Programme is providing both interventions in the same target areas which gives the learners some hope. A TVET beneficiary is given toolkits along with the training which helps her set up her business e.g. sewing machine etc.

These challenges are common to literacy programmes in rural settings however, context-based help is not always around. 241,902 COs, 3,281 VOs and 142 LSOs fostered under BRACE provide a supportive network to the community members in the form of monthly meetings, self-help initiatives and forming linkages with local government line departments. This network is further adding value to the literacy programme and helping ensure that the learners continue their journey of social and economic upward mobility.

The European Union Funded

BRACE Programme

Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) programme is supported by the European Union (EU) and being implemented in close collaboration with the Local Government and Rural Development (LG&RD) Department of the Government of Balochistan (GoB). The Grant component of this five year (2017-2022) Programme is being implemented by Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) in nine districts of Balochistan. BRACE is working in Jhal Magsi, Kech, Khuzdar, Killa Abdullah, Loralai, Pishin, Duki, Washuk and Zhob. The programme is technically supported by Human Dynamics (HD), an Austrian company that will support Government of Balochistan in fostering an enabling environment for strengthening the capacities of local authorities to manage and involve communities in the statutory local public sector planning, financing and implementation processes.



"This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union."

More information about the European Union is available on:

Web: eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan_en European Union
Facebook: EUinPakistan
Twitter: EUpakistan

Content Management & Edits:

Assad Abbas Malik, Communications Officer BRACE

Content Support: Zainab Kakar-BRSP, Zeeshan Chohan-NRSP

Image credits:

All pictures used in this publication are property of the BRACE Programme



Rural Support Programmes Network

IRM Complex, 3rd Floor. Plot# 7, Sunrise Avenue
(Off Park Road), Near COMSATS University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Phone: +92-51-8491270-99, Fax: +92-51-8351791

www.rspn.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BRACEProgramme

Reviewed by:

Fehmida Hassan, Programme Manager BRACE, Sylvia Beamish, EU-Consultant
© 2019 Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN). All Rights Reserved.
Licensed to the European Union under conditions.

Design & Layout: Dot Advertising