

## From Poverty to Prosperity

Imagine a remote village in Kech district of Balochistan, with half fallen huts and mud houses, bumpy roads, and children playing in sand. An unhappy picture? Not for Iliyas. “Those days were the happiest,” she says, “as we would play in sand from dawn to dusk. I cared less about how I was provided food to eat and clothes to wear,” Iliyas was one of the children, who never attended a school. His father was a daily wage labourer, who barely earned two times of meal for the family never imagined his child to attend a school. He said, that his childhood life changed for the worst when his father suffered from an illness and stayed bed ridden for years. Iliyas, being the eldest among his siblings, was sent out to work and earn for the family.

At the age of 13, Iliyas started to work as daily wage labourer. Later, he found an opportunity to work as a helper in a barber shop. He said, ‘On a meager wage, I worked at the shop for eight years. I learned to cut, style and shave boys’ and men’s hair and beard.’ Iliyas served the customers with care and respect and they appreciated his skills. However, the shop owner disagreed to increase his wage. ‘It was very difficult for me to fulfill all the needs, as I had a wife and three children by this time. Inflation increased but my earnings remained same for years. I wanted to provide a better future for my children, but that was just a dream,’ he says. His wife and their three children (two sons and a daughter) lived in subsistence.

The family’s life changed for better when Iliyas’s wife, Lal Jan, became a member of a community organisation (CO) in the settlement. She actively participated in the CO meetings. In one of the meetings she learned that her household poverty score is eight and she that she is eligible for a grant under European Union funded BRACE Programme. After getting grant support of PKR 33,400, in December 2019, with Lal Jan’s consent, Iliyas rented a shop and bought basic tools for a Barber shop. He said that he also took a loan of PKR 20,000 from a neighbour and furnished the shop with mirrors and chairs. With a satisfying smile on his face he said, “I opened my own business on the new year 2020. The customers who liked my service in the previous shop, now visit here. I earn PKR



800 – PKR 1200 on daily basis and PKR 25,000 a month. On the events such as Eid, I get more work and earn even more...I have recently renovated my house and bought a motorbike. Now, I can see my dream come true. I am able to provide better food and clothes to my family. My eldest son, 6, now attends a formal school.”

On asking about how income generating grant supported, he said “it was a way to take life in your own hands – to become independent, finally able to support your own family, and to plan a better future for the children.”