



Exposure visit of Women Leaders from Balochistan

24th August, 2021, Union CouncilGujjar Khan

In an effort to form synergies and implement the Action Plan detailed in the BRACE Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, BRSP is coordinating with major stakeholders like Women Development Department, Women Parliamentary Caucus, and the academia. To strengthen these collaborations, BRSP has formed a group of government officials, women parliamentarians, and university faculty members. BRSP, with the support of RSPN and NRSP planned for a delegation of women leaders from Balochistan to visit Islamabad to understand and learn from the work being carried out by RSPN and NRSP.

The delegation, comprising Mahjabeen Sheeran,Parliamentary Secretary, Women Development Department, Faiza Mir, lecturer International Relations department, University of Balochistan, and women managers from BRSP head office was taken to NRSP's LSO Sui Cheemian in Gujjar Khan, Rawalpindi. RSPN BRACE facilitated the delegation; MIS Officer BRACE RSPN and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer BRACE RSPN accompanied the party.

The LSO leaders welcomed the delegation at their office andtheir woman Information Secretary presented an introduction of the LSO and a summary of its achievements. The LSO was formed in 2007 and has 198 CIs under it (129 women and 66 men and 3 mix). There are 23 women and 18 men in the executive body of the LSO. The LSO has a coverage of 91% in 202. It has given CIF funds to 1380 people (944 one time loans and 436 repeated loans). 'Azadi Sarmaya Programme'supportshouseholds with a poverty score of 0-15, in starting their own microenterprise. 32 households have benefitted from this programme. The LSO Executive body members sharedother activities successfully conducted by the LSO, including testing ofdrinking water, immunisation of children, awareness raising sessions on health and

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cleanliness, distribution of food packages to families affected by COVID-19 lockdown and awareness raising sessions and distribution of masks for COVID-19 prevention.

The delegation of women leaders appreciated the LSO's efforts and asked the women members of the LSO about any challenges they may have faced, and if and how they overcame said challenges. The women managers from BRSP were especially interested in this so they could benefit from the experiences of the women community members and share their learnings with the women beneficiaries in Balochistan to encourage and inspire them. The women members of the LSO explained when they started out they lacked confidence and were in need of guidance; they also faced transport and mobility issues. The women members of LSO were able to overcome these challenges with the support of the men members of the LSO who fostered a positive environment.

Yasmeen, a beneficiary who received funds under the Azadi Fund grant, stood up to share her story with the delegation. She said she was under a financial crunch before the intervention, but the PKR 10,000 grant helped her establish her own parlour. She now earns PKR 10,000 to 15,000 from her enterprise and is able to send all her five children to school.

An LSO member shared how the Community Institutions are able to carry out high quality development projects in a cost-effective manner, compared to the government's method. Often the community pitches in money to construct roads and shows ownership for the project. Faiza Mir, lecturer at the University of Balochistan faculty member chipped in saying *"aap kaaj, maha kaaj"*

LSO Sui Cheemian office has a photocopier machine for the neighbourhood; profits made from this service are used to run the LSO office.

Mahjabeen Sheeran appreciated the LSO's efforts and achievements. She shared that the government is working on many initiatives for women, to secure their rights such as inheritance rights and right to work. However, it is up to the Community institutions to spread the word and create awareness within the community.

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On their way back, the delegation was invited to a lunch with the NRSP and RSPN staffs well as the LSO members.

The delegation was hosted for dinner by the CEO RSPN. this was also attended by the CEO NRSP, COO RSPN, M&E Specialist RSPN, Programme Officer Gender and Development RSPN, BRACE Programme Manager RSPN and the BRACE PMU team.

Photographs from the Exposure Visit



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