



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 Ruzhan

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| District Khuzdar | Union Council Goni | Date of Formation 04-01-2021 | Total Households in Union Council 1,524 | Organised Households 951 | Coverage 62% |
| Number of COs 84 <small>40 MEN 44 WOMEN</small> | | Number of VOs 22 <small>12 MEN 10 WOMEN</small> | # of General Body Members 32 <small>ALL MEN</small> | # of Executive Committee Members 11 <small>ALL MEN</small> | <small>as of 31st March 2021</small> |

Local Support organisation Ruzhan from Union Council (UC) Goni, District Khuzdar, was formed on 4th January, 2020 under the EU funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRACE). The total households in the UC are 1,524, and out of those, 951 households have been organised i.e. the UC has a household coverage of 62%. These 951 households have been organised into 84 Community Organisations (COs) and 22 Village Organisations (VOs) and Local Support Organisation (LSO). LSO Ruzhan is actively planning and implementing development activities both on self-help basis as well as in collaboration with government agencies and donors. 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.

Combating COVID-19

Four months after the LSO was formed, the coronavirus disease spread rapidly across Pakistan. Realising their responsibility, the LSO leaders immediately convened a meeting of its Executive Body, and discussed and decided on steps to protect their union council from this deadly disease.

Right after the meeting, the LSO leaders contacted its VO leaders across the UC and initiated awareness-raising sessions on loudspeakers in every village on the nature of, and risks associated with, the novel disease. The sessions also guided the public on precautionary measures to take to prevent themselves, their family members and the public at large from catching the coronavirus infection.

Similar announcements were repeatedly made from mosques and other places of worship.

The LSO leaders also conducted meetings at the village

level to raise awareness about the disease and on the use of face mask and sanitisers.

The LSO and VO leaders spread awareness raising messages about the disease and preventive measures against it through WhatsApp and text messages in various social media groups as well as to their relatives and friends.

The poor families of the area, especially those who lived off of daily wages, were greatly affected by the Government imposed lockdown to prevent the fast spread of the disease. The LSO leaders identified such families and registered nine such households with EHSAS Cash Grant Programme. The deserving families were happy to start receiving the Government fund.

On the advice of the LSO leaders, the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) started delivering awareness sessions on COVID-19 in CO meetings along with their usual sessions

on Community Awareness Toolkits. This is an ongoing activity.

With the support of BRSP staff, the LSO leaders made loudspeaker announcements in 10 main villages and market places and requested both the shopkeepers and the buyers to observe government recommended SOPs to control the spread of the virus.

Establishment of English language Centre

Goni is one of the most backward Union Councils in Tehsil Naal. In addition to the lack of other facilities in life, the area also has a dearth of educational facilities. Moreover, there are serious problems of law and order in the Union Council, which have particularly affected educational activities. Teachers travelling into the UC from other areas and cities refuse to carry out their duties under the pretext of poor law and order situation.

The leaders of LSO Ruzhan, Goni held a meeting to discuss and seek out practical solutions to improve the state of education of girls and boys in the UC. Their brainstorming session landed them on the mutually agreed upon idea of establishing an English Language Centre to improve the English literacy of the students. The idea was approved by all and the centre by the name of "Shashan English Language Centre" was established in December 2020. It was also decided to provide free of cost books to orphans and poor children. Three literate individuals volunteered to teach at the centre. The language

centre has been operational since last December. The number of students are increasing with time, and at the moment 55 students including 25 girls and 30 boys are attending sessions at the language centre.



Enrolment of Girls and Boys in Government Schools

The leaders of LSO Ruzhan realised that a large number of school aged girls and boys are out of school. This was mainly because the parents of these children were unaware of the benefits of education. To remedy this, the LSO leaders decided to launch village-wise enrolment campaigns for children of school going age, with close coordination and support of VO leaders. This campaign resulted in a steady increase in the enrolment ratio. So far, a total of 45 children including 20 girls and 25 boys have been enrolled in schools. The enrolment work is ongoing and the LSO leaders are determined to enrol all out of school children in schools.

Coordination with Government Agencies for Development Work

Before the formation of the LSO Ruzhan, a 35 km Link Road project connecting UC Goni with the highway was tendered.





LSO leaders and general public protesting against the obstruction of the Link Road Project.

A few months later, the contractor started work. However, he abruptly stopped construction work on the project after completing only 5% of the work. When asked the reason for suspension of further work, he made a lame excuse of law and order situation.

After the establishment of LSO Ruzhan, the LSO leaders convened a meeting in which all notables of the Union Council were invited. The agenda of the meeting was to liaise with government agencies to resume work on the road; the participants decided that a delegation of LSO members should meet the Deputy Commissioner.

On 6th March 2021 a delegation from LSO Ruzhan met with the Deputy Commissioner of Khuzdar and briefed him on the unnecessary suspension of work on their development project. The Deputy Commissioner assured the representatives of LSO Ruzhan that work on Link Road Goni would be resumed as soon as possible. However, his promises did not result in action. The LSO also contacted and met with other concerned Government Departments to seek their help in resuming work on the Link Road project, but this too resulted in inaction. Consequently, LSO Ruzhan held a press conference at Khuzdar Press Club to amplify their voice and speak about the challenges they faced. As a result of this press conference, the Commissioner held a meeting with LSO and assured them a solution to the obstruction of road work.

The LSO though happy with their progress has decided to file a complaint against the contractor in the National Accountability Bureau if the Commissioner fails to fulfil his promise. This resolve bore fruit; due to the persistent policy advocacy of the LSO leaders, the work on the project was resumed and around 35% of the project has been completed so far. The quality of the work has also improved significantly.



LSO leaders making a press conference in the local Press Club



EUROPEAN UNION

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

Reported by: Mohammad Ali Azizi, Specialist Social Mobilisation, RSPN
Acknowledgment: Naseer Sasoli, CBO Khuzdar and Akbar Khan Achakzai, Manager HID, BRSP
Edited by: Zahra Rao, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, BRACE, RSPN



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