

Note for Record

Visit to SRSO of MCMC officers and

SSK Dialoguer with LSO Activists on November 23, 2021

**By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
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I was making my first visit to Karachi in two years since the advent of COVID-19 and planned to stay for three days to deliver Akhter Hameed Khan Memorial Lecture at NED University and also to call on the Chief Minister Sindh, if CEO SRSO could arrange it. Dittal not only got me the appointment with the CM, he also suggested to me to return to Islamabad via Sukkur and meet the Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) officers who were visiting SRSO for two days.

As my flight from Karachi to Sukkur got delayed, I reached late at night on November 22 and missed the reception hosted by SRSO for MCMC officers. The officers of Mid-Career Management Course comprising 28 officers belonged to Provincial Civil Service (PCS) and Provincial Secretariat Service (PSS) holding positions in following departments:

- Finance
- Irrigation
- Education & Literacy
- Health
- Planning and Development
- Deputy Secretary CM House
- Home
- SPSC
- Deputy Commissioner
- Additional Deputy Commissioner
- Secretary to Government

The programme followed by the officers at SRSO was meeting with representatives of LSOs and field visit to different villages, Workshop on PPRP at office of SRSO.

The workshop programme included (i) VO and LSO presentations; (ii) Group field experience sharing and (iii) case studies.

In the group presentations, each group shared their experience of field visit and greatly appreciated what they saw and also made some general recommendations like literacy, IT and adding social sector interventions.

On being invited to give my views, I welcomed the visit of officers to SRSO and apprised the officers of the genesis of SRSO as to why Government of Sindh thought of setting up another organisation when for almost every activity, there is a dedicated government department or agency.

The main objective of SRSO is to foster a framework of rural community institutions to enable public service departments to deliver their services and supplies to each rural household, especially the poor as poverty is at the household level. The three tier structure of community institutions i.e. CO, VO and LSO are meant to be used as conduit by departments and agencies for delivery of their services.

Over now a decade Government of Sindh support supplemented by European Union in 8 districts, SRSO and two other RSPs (NRSP set up by Federal Government) and TRDP reached 20 districts. SRSO has organised 1.3 million households supported by Government of Sindh and 0.6 million households in 8 districts funded by EU. Thus of the total 4.3 million rural households in Sindh of which 2.7 million are below poverty line, 1.9 million households have been organised and the government is planning to support the remaining two districts and rural areas of Karachi and Hyderabad districts to cover the entire province.

I submitted to the officers of the course belonging to different departments to give their proposals and recommendations and suggestions how their respective department can use the organised CO, VO and LSO as a conduit for their services and supplies meant for rural households.

I told them about my recent meeting with the Chief Minister Sindh and my submission to him for issuance of an office order to departments to use CO/VO/LSO as conduit for their services and supplies.

I exhorted the officers their recommendations and suggestions, will greatly help in operationalizing the proposed office order. By doing so you will be helping in achieving the main objective of the Government of Sindh in supporting fostering of framework of rural poor household's institutions i.e. CO, VO, LSO.

You must appreciate that the major portion of ADP goes to departments and agencies, for example PPRP, on an average does not get more than one billion rupees out of the over 200 billion rupees ADP. It is only by channeling departmental services and supplies to each poor household that poverty can be eliminated.

After the MCMC officers workshop was over, I had a discussion with over a dozen LSO activists who had come to attend the workshop and present their case studies. In the discussion, I was thrilled how the activists spoke of their experiences and achievements which are given below:

Women Name: Ms. Noor Bano

Co Name: Ali Mardan (President)

VO: Jaend khan Junejo (Manager)

LSO: FatiullahGhumro(Khazanachi (Cashier)

UC: FatiullahGhumro

Taluka: Kingri

District Khairpur

First of all, she paid thanks to Government of Sindh and SRSO for sparing a few minutes for listening to her voice that today we are present in SRSO Office Sukkur due to your kind office legacy of empowering women through community institution and mobilization by igniting the innate potential that they possess and never give up to male dominant society being illiterate and not knowing what is written on walls/newspaper, etc.

She said that sir, this is all due to your hardworking SRSO team for trickling down your message of uniting themselves properly and now its CIF that has almost been utilized three times by women for product extensions of their businesses, agriculture business (avoid to take a loan from landlord), etc. She also said that thanks to the Government of Sindh that advantages us by bestowing low costs houses, community investment funds, women making their groups of business. All privileges are given in the name of only women. The woman who used to be infatuated towards men just for 5 rupees. Now they are working individually volunteering running a business and working hard for their homes and beloved ones all prestige goes to the Sindh government and Sindh Rural Support Organization.

Women Name: Ms. SharBano

CO: Kehar Khan (President)

VO: Dua (President)

LSO: Roshni (General Secretary)

UC: Noorpur

Taluka: Kingri

District: Khairpur

She started with a Poetry that Shoaib Shb of an old era when there was no electricity concept, people enlighten the candle with the help of kerosene oil, now for us (illiterate women) you are a candle in the deep darkness where our male dominant society is merciless and no one is paying attention for the development of another woman. Most important is that most NGOs came for help purposes, but SRSO and being a pioneer of the PPRP program has dedicated the soul of enlightening the lives of many rural women who are economically empowered and have increased financial, social and economic capital.

We see SRSO in every good deed. All happened due to the help of the organization which SRSO had made at the community level. Who amongst you will not be surprised and will praise me about the heart-burning story. Young age marriage is a big issue in our locality but I will share a story about forced marriage. A woman from our community with 7 children her husband died, after iddat period her relatives forced her to marry a guy, she called help from LSO members. Then we tried and we hired a lawyer and we won the case. After that, people wrote an apology who were agreeable to forced marriage of that women.

SSK observed that this is all because of you women and Govt of Sindh so you all must thank Govt of Sindh. Then MsShaharBano said Govt of Sindh is like father and SRSO is like mother, whatever father do but always we remember and praise mother.

Women Name: Sakina Jamro

CO: Sadia (Manager)

VO: Menhow Khan (Manager)

LSO: Sarmast (General body Member)

UC: Daraza

Taluka: Gambat

She started her dialogue that miracles happened due to the social mobilization approach initiated by your kind office. Now their results are coming that proven tracking record of mobilization expertise has brought different changes that we are fully empowered, making our house decision, sending our children to school, behaviors have changed and women have increased institutional birth, villagers are now focusing on hygiene and sanitation. Indeed, she said you will be happy to know that a girl from a bonded family is now working for community mobilization and now working as a social organizer.

She narrated an inspirational story and their success that in our village, we are everywhere in homes where child marriage has happened and now we are protecting such girls from every curse of the society. Now, let me tell you a little story as we have started working on humanitarian assistance in terms of medical checkup/ medical treatment bore multiple social issues: Likewise, a girl from the near village was about to become blind and she has Glaucoma in her eyes as per doctor's report. Her family is extremely poor and have no economic strength, so we conducted a VO meeting and passed a resolution that few women from our VO will take this girl to GIMS- Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences hospital and arrange the financial expenses from collection from various well-wishers and from members and collect 80,000 to take her to Karachi for a medical treatment of one and for other eye further more than one lac rupees for medical treatment is required , so we are searching and approaching philanthropist to save her both eyes and life to see the colorful work, due to medical treatment she is now feeling great to see colourful world. Now she is well sighted and living a normal life.

Women Name: ShaguftaSolangi

CO :Ajwa (Manager)

VO: Gagri (Manager)

LSO: Hajna shah (Chairperson)

UC: Hajan

Taluka: Kingri

She initiated her dialogue saying that today we are empowered that we are conducting and meeting with Political leaders which were never in access before Community institutions. Now we are famous due to these CIs(CO/VO/LSO) office-bearers.

She recited her career achievement being an empowered woman that has led the success story that is a volunteer community, she had arranged women gathering program for Dr. Nafesa Shah (Member of National Assembly) and gathered around about 2000 women. She met with all VO leaders and recognized their efforts and said proudly to be part of such leaders that have worked for mobilizing the community for representing these women. As a result, she applauded all the CIs women and for this gathering, Dr. Nafesa Shah gifted me an Ajraak and nominated me in the reserved seat of the union council.

Also, she said when SRSO had organized women in LSO, the local Molvi of the village has asserted to stop these activities as this is against the teachings of Islam. But LSO didn't stop their activities and through mobilization, women stand up and never give up against these characters. They accomplished all the tasks and our action speaks in our village that today we are more empowered and we have financial access and productive assets from the Community Investment fund that has increased our value in home and this CIF is a catalyst for all these women that we are getting at our doorstep and the small loan is our life and changed the fate and lives of ours. This is the pure result of community mobilization

She said that LSOis now owner of 45 hundred thousand of Community Investment Fund and recovered two installments 100% successfully and all women have changed their lives, increased the livelihood, income-generating activities and boost up their living standard with collective thinking of polishing their innate skills for living not surviving by proper utilization of CIF. Now LSO is active in every aspect and working for marginalized people.