



Implemented in Collaboration with the Local Government and Rural Development Department, Government of Balochistan

Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme

# NEWS LETTER

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# RSPN – Rural Support Programmes Network

## CEO RSPN's Visit to Women VO Networks in District Khuzdar

Ms Shandana Humayun Khan, Chief Executive Officer RSPN, lead a contingent of female development professionals from RSPN and BRSP and visited the Women Village Organisation (VO) Networks fostered by BRSP in district Khuzdar, Balochistan. The visit was from 27th till 30th March 2022. The purpose of this visit was to analyse the progress, document achievements, and observe downward accountability with VO Network members. The delegation visited LSO Gowarikh, and two Women VO Network members of LSO Baghbana III and LSO Tootak. These networks are led by young and resilient community activists under which women from various villages are organised to voice their needs. These leaders proudly represent the women of their communities. They stand tall and proud, claiming their space and excited at the opportunity to be heard.

During the first quarter of 2022 BRSP with the support of European Union formed 14 Women Networks in the BRACE target districts of Khuzdar, Loralai, Jhal Magsi, Killa Abdullah, Zhob and Pishin in line with the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of the BRACE Programme. The



women networks were formed when it was witnessed that women voices were not reaching the union council level organisations, the LSO. Due to cultural constraints, women could not attend the LSO meetings with the men and hence their needs were not prioritised. Additionally, mobility seemed to be hampering the women participation therefore, BRSP formed these women networks on pilot basis by clustering VOs together. The network serves as a vibrant

platform for women to share the vision of representing themselves at the Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) forum and strengthen their linkages with the local government. It also depicts the shared dream and vision of women organised under this platform to be able to advocate for their rights and emerge as leaders of their own communities. These women are strong, hopeful, and innovative in how they approach, and resolve issues that they face.



## EU-Funded BRACE Programme's Policy Advocacy Events in District Kech, Balochistan

Following the success of the Policy Advocacy Workshop in Quetta on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021, National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) with the facilitation of Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) organised a series of Policy Advocacy events from 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 in Turbat, district Kech. The purpose of these events was to share the findings of the research carried out by RSPN under the EU-Funded BRACE Programme with the district and tehsil-level stakeholders and government officials in district Kech.

In this regard, NRSP and RSPN presented two research studies titled "Community Livelihood Enhancement through Community Investment Fund (CIF), Income Generating Grants (IGG) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)" and "Participatory Action Research on Dynamics of Household Poverty and Inclusive Development in Balochistan, with a focus on Women's Empowerment" to the stakeholders that included Government department officials, JDDC members,



district administration, NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Community Institutions fostered under the BRACE Programme.

The event was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Kech, Mr Hussain Jan Baloch. Assistant Commissioner Turbat, Mr Aqeel Karim was the chief guest on the second day and Divisional Director Local Government Makran, Mr Shay Zahoor ul Hassan graced the occasion on the concluding day.

NRSP Regional General Manager, Mr Nabeel Baloch told media that this EU-



Funded Programme has decreased the number of poor households in district Kech by 20 percent.



Some of the most prominent and widely read newspapers and media agencies of the region extensively covered these events.

## BRSP – Balochistan Rural Support Programme

### 1. Women Networks participating in JDDC Khuzdar

A Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) meeting was held at the DC Office in Khuzdar. It was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mr Siraj Kareem and representatives from line departments and civil society participated in this meeting. For the very first time, Women from rural Khuzdar were invited to this high level meeting. Ms Noreen Faiz, represented Bright Future Women Network and explained that a women network was formed to provide rural women a platform where they can discuss development issues



with government and can participate in meetings to raise women voices collectively.

Miss Noreen raised the issue of dysfunctional health facility and closed schools in her union council. She had a list compiled of poor rural women without CNICs who needed

assistance in issuance of CNIC and voter registration. Female Education Officer, Ms Zahida Mustafa, noted down the issue of closed schools in UC Tootak and issued orders for the schools to be re-opened. Mr Siraj Kareem, Additional Deputy Commissioner noted down her complaints and promised to re-open the closed Basic Health Unit. He also promised to send an MVR van to her area so that rural women without CNIC have be facilitated at their convenience.

### 2. CIF Case Study from Duki

Since the pandemic, the global economy has been affected badly and inflation rate is making it more difficult for daily wagers to make ends meet. In hard times like these, Bibi Amina from Duki, Balochistan is an inspiration for her utmost resilience and courage. Bibi Amina's husband is a daily wager and it was difficult for him to find work in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To support her husband, she applied for Community Investment Fund (CIF) loan provided by Balochistan Rural Support





Programme under European Union funded Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme. CIF grants aim at empowering women socially and financially by stimulating an average 30% increase in their income. After her initial assessment and appraisal for the loan by the Local Support Organisation (LSO) Viala Duki, she received a loan of PKR 20,000/ which helped her husband to start a tea shop leading to a regular monthly income. CIF sub grant to community institutions is an integral part of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) Social Mobilisation approach. The Community Investment Fund is a revolving fund that is given to Local Support Organisations and is meant to facilitate members of the LSO. These community institutions will then provide a platform for planning and implementation of household level interventions to improve the lives of the rural community members especially the women. The CIF will be managed and implemented by these community institutions themselves as it works as an adhesive to keep the community organised and united. Bibi Amina and her husband now earn an average of PKR 10,500/ each month. Poverty reduction is not a linear path but interventions like CIF are definitely making a difference in the lives of poor women like Bibi Amina.



### 3. Empowering Persons with Special Needs through livelihood opportunities in Jhal Magsi

BRSP through European Union-Funded BRACE Programme aims to support maximum number of Persons with Special Needs (PWSNs) by providing assistive devices and livelihood support. So far, BRACE Programme has supported 5,386 PWSNs through



provision of assistive devices including wheelchairs, tri-cycles, hearing aids, artificial limbs & braces (prosthesis & orthosis) and tri-motorcycles. Assistive devices exponentially increased their mobility. Five tri-motorcycles were distributed to PWSNs in the distribution held at Circuit House Gandawah. Mr Mir Tariq Khan, Minister Services and General Administration Department distributed the tri-cycles. Commissioner Naseerabad Division, Deputy Commissioner Jhal Magsi Dr Sharjeel Noor, Assistant Commissioner Gandawah Mr Hidayat Ullah, Deputy Director Social Welfare Mr Hafeez Ullah Khosa, SP police Mr Subhan Magsi and other stakeholders graced the distribution ceremony with their presence.

### 4. Camel Library in Washuk, Khuzdar and Jhal Magsi

Innovative mobile library services in rural areas of Balochistan have been launched in partnership with Alif Laila Society, a unique organisation sincere towards the cause of learning in Pakistan. Local transportation mediums and channels are utilised including camels, boats, motorcycles and rickshaws so that this low cost intervention can quickly be replicated throughout the province. BRSP's volunteer organisations (LSOs), registered with the government and based at union council level established with the financial support of European Union in Pakistan under BRACE Program have rolled out this intervention. Other than encouraging book reading culture in youth, particularly the girl child, through high quality story books published in local language as well as





Urdu, the project will also provide 8,000 books to schools in districts Washuk, Khuzdar and Jhal Magsi.

Students in rural areas have limited or no access to internet, laptop, mobile or any other form of virtual education as compared to their urban counterparts thus they cannot partake in online classes. Students in such far flung areas of Balochistan which do not have access to internet now have access to “ Camel Library,” BRSP and Alif Laila are now distributing books through camel libraries to school children. LSO Sachaan which is fostered by BRSP under European Union funded BRACE Programme distributed Urdu and Balochi story books to 200 students. This initiative aims to promote literacy in the province with easy access to

books for children residing in rural areas.

## 5. Community Resource Persons creating Invaluable Human Capital across Balochistan

Most rural women do not have access to information on critical issues, such as health & hygiene family planning, HIV AIDS, women specific human rights, maternal and reproductive health etc. This information gap is bridged by Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who play a pivotal role in communicating information on cross cutting issues. The CRP model is highly effective and successful in programme implementation and disseminating door to door information in rural Balochistan.

**Creation of Human Capital:** The community will have an informed resource person to continue disseminating information long after the programme withdraws.

**Community Reception:** People of the village will be very familiar with the CRP as they are from the same locality. The community will be more comfortable and fast in developing relations with the CRP.

**Sustainability:** The CRP is from the community and hence comes with a solid and strong awareness of what is best for their community. The probability of them committing and sustaining through the cause is very high.

**Opportunity:** This model gives the opportunity for the local social activists who cannot migrate to other places because of various reasons and responsibilities.

**The European Union-funded BRACE Programme** has hired and extensively trained more than 1000 Community Resource Persons in over 250 union councils, out of which 60% are women, in ten BRACE districts: Khuzdar, Jhal Magsi, Washuk, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Chaman, Zhob, Loralai, Duki and Kech.



# NRSP - National Rural Support Programme

## BRACE communities conserves drops to make up an ocean through better groundwater management!

The value of water is not understood well until the wells run dry! Being an arid-region from origin with limited and seasonal surface water resources, the Baloch communities have housed ancient Karez water supply system that has long served as a buffer against and long dry spells and protracted droughts. According to some studies<sup>1</sup>, About one-third of the 3,000 such systems that were believed to be in place in 1970 are still functioning. Aside from its cultural and historical significance, the Karez system has helped transform the agrarian landscape of the uplands, improving socioeconomic conditions. However, recurring droughts since the 1960s resulted in reduced recharge to groundwater supporting the Karez systems at a time of growing demands. To maintain their livelihoods, farmers installed tubewells, aided by energy subsidies from the provincial government.

Though the community had meager resources, they were so excited that they contributed 10% of the total project cost, both in terms of cash and in-kind, besides pooling up sizable resources for the post-completion operation and maintenance of the scheme. With a total cost of PKR. 489,000, the scheme rehabilitation was completed in January 2020 in almost seven months.

The raised water level in the Karez has raised the hopes and rescued the 'dying agriculture'. Community is committed to restore agriculture in all those lands that were once irrigated but became rain-fed after the water level in Karez dropped. Besides immediate economic benefits, this scheme has long-term 'social and environmental' impacts. The communities are sensitised through CAT sessions to protect environment through tree plantation. Without the



Rehabilitation has almost doubled the water discharge and quantity

financial support from EU-Funded BRACE Programme, this serene village could have turned into rugged dry mountain mountains in few years!

The community's resolve, hard work and commitment backed by BRACE's funding support has enabled them to conserve water. And they conserved the life!



1. Water Knowledge Note – The World Bank Group

## Financial inclusion is helping the helpless women to live a dignified life in a patriarchal Baloch society!

The BRACE Programme has opened a plethora of opportunities for deprived women to realize their development potential and attain a higher level of social and economic well-being through a proven and responsive menu of assistance in terms of access to financial grants blended with technical assistance, exposure to public sector, capacity building and linkages to markets. Since ages, the women in highly conservative and patriarchal Balochi society are conventionally marginalized and 'kept at arm's length' in financial matters, important decisions and social networking. However, the situation is now changing gradually and the BRACE Programme communities are witnessing some radical changes with visible cracks in the traditional patriarchal strangleholds. Women are learning skills, running businesses and interacting with duty bearers and service providers. The women from ultra-poor and poor households are experiencing higher levels of socioeconomic empowerment and their families are resultantly experiencing improved nutrition and food security.

Parveen Shaukat, 40, and mother of 09 children (04 boys and 05 girls) is among those women icons who chose to break the shackles of poverty imposed on them by the society. Hailing from an extremely remote and underprivileged Balicha union council of Tehsil Tump, District Kech, she was living with her miseries as sole breadwinner of the family after the untimely death of her husband. She had to feed her children as well as other family members. She learnt some traditional Balochi embroidery locally and was just making her both ends meet with less than Rs. 5,000 that she was earning. She and her children could not afford good food, clothes, education and proper medical treatment as she did not have sources for anything other than two time's meals.



Parveen is running a Tuck-shop to live a decent life!

She did not have hopes from anyone as the entire community was living in same deprivation, completely devoid of basic amenities and necessities.

Her CO Raessabad (Female) and other community members helped her in basic preparations to set up a shop. They visited local market and identified items. The day she got the money, she went with her CO members and bought all necessary items to fill her tuck shop. She had already installed a low-cost wooden cabinet structure in her shop to display the items. She formally inaugurated her shop in December 2019. NRSP and BRACE Programme provided her basic orientation on the Business Management skills. As an eager learner, she learnt how to reinvest the profit into her business by timely replenishing the items.

Months after setting up her shop, she considers herself an altogether changed person. She is confident and managing her sales and purchases on her own. The community supported her in overcoming teething problems in setting up her shop and establishing linkages with wholesale dealers in local markets. She

is considered as an emerging and self-made businesswoman, and respected for her resilience. The way she made efforts, before and after IGG, to live a dignified life has set precedence for other women as well. She is currently earning PKR.10,000 a month from her shop. While sitting in her shop and at nights, she also manages her embroidery work and earns extra money which she is reinvesting into her business. A business started with PKR. 33,400 is now expanding. She estimates the total worth of her shop as more than PKR. 50,000.

Parveen plans to educate her children so that they can live a better life. She attributes all this to the timely assistance of BRACE Programme and the unwavering support that she received from her community. She is determined to build on this little opportunity to give her children a secure and decent future. She is also resilient to social pressures that she faces from the patriarchal society while running her shop and interacting with other market players. The exposure and courage that she received from BRACE Programme is driving her to graduate out of poverty very soon!

# BRACE Technical Assistance (TA)

## 1. Facilitating Registration of Community Institutions (CI) and NGOs

The BRACE Technical Assistance (TA) Project in coordination with Social Welfare Department (SWD), Government of Balochistan (GoB) through SWD's wing Balochistan Charities Registration and Regulation Authority (BCR&RA) facilitated in organization of briefing session-cum-workshop on the Online Registration System for NGOs/NPOs working in the Development of Social Sector. These briefing session-cum-workshop were organized at District Registration Facilitation Centres (RFC) of BCR&RA in each of the nine BRACE targeted Districts. The briefing session-cum-workshop on the Online Registration System for NGOs/NPOs were organized for the representatives, heads of NPO/NGOs and of the BRSP, NRSP, LSO, VO, CO, and other CIs of the 09 targeted districts under BRACE Programme. The TA-facilitated the BCR&RA to brief and build capacity of the current group of BRACE NGO/LSO/CIs, in the use of the BCR&RA online Registration system. Secondly a broader group of CBO/NGO/LSOs were invited to Register and to become future institutionalized partners of GoB Local Governance systems. the briefing sessions were initiated back in last quarter of 2021 under the BRACE TA Result Area 4 which aims at "Institutionalization and Capacity



building of CIs". A total of 09 briefing session-cum-workshops were organized by the BCR&RA and the BRACE TA which were attended by approximately 380 representatives of CIs/NGOs/NPOs. The objective of these briefing session-cum-workshop on the Online Registration System for NGOs/NPOs was to build capacity of District NGO/LSO/CIs to complete the required Registration Procedures. The findings of the BCR&RA

Briefing sessions will also serve as input in the GoB Community-led Local Governance Policy Implementation Arrangement for CI Registration, which is being developed by the TA and the Local Government and Rural Development Department (LGRDD). The BCR&RA final report can found on BRACE Website <https://brace.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/BTOR-BCRRA-15-3-2022.pdf>.



## 2. The 5th Strategy and Policy Dialogue Committee (SPDC) Meeting was held on 03-03-2022 at the P&DD under chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Salman Mufti



### 3. The BRACE Technical Assistance (TA) Team meets Secretary Local Government & Rural Development Department (LGRDD) in Quetta



### 4. Stories from the District Development Strategy and Plan (DDSP) assignment on the role of the Joint District Development Committee (JDDC)

The LG&RD Department and the BRACE TA Project implemented in 2021, a short-term District Development Strategy & Plan (DDSP) Assignment, in three pilot Districts (Kech, Loralai/Pishin), to develop in a participatory manner streamlined

JDDC Meeting Procedures, to ensure that the GoB Top-down development investments and Community Bottom-Up development plans and activities, are coordinated and integrated, by the JDDC Chair. The final report of DDSP Assignment

can be accessed on <https://brace.org.pk/resource-category/ta-project-and-dai-hd-resources/>. The selected District Stakeholder expressed their opinions on the streamline role the JDDC is to play, and these are captured below.

**“We know that we do not have enough resources available, and therefore it is even more important that we use and coordinate our scarce resources and the JDDC Forum provides a unique opportunity to do so”, says Dr Ateeq ur Rehman, Deputy Commissioner, Loralai**

“We know that we are facing limitations in providing resources to union councils (UCs). Some of the UCs do not have office spaces, furniture and other basic facilities”, shared Dr Ateeq ur Rehman, Deputy Commissioner, Loralai.

He added that “I observed during the JDDC meeting held on 28 Sep 2021 that BRSP through BRACE Program is providing similar facilities and resources to the Local Support Organizations (LSOs), working in the same UCs. So, I advised Mr Qutab Mandokhail, District



Figure 1 JDDC Meeting, Loralai, 28 Sep, 2021

Manager BRSP and Mr Kaleem, Assistant Director Local Government to guide LSOs and UCs to share resources for efficiency”.

we are now working even more closely”, says Gohar Khan, President LSO Etihad, Union Lahore.

“On the direction of the Deputy Commissioner Sahib, I and the Secretary Union Council, Lahore now set in one office. We share the same office space, furniture and other resources provided by the BRACE Programme. This direction by the DC Sahib enlightened us that our area, issues, and people are common and

It was generally concluded that the JDDC Forum could identify and then activate synergy, that would yield more value for money and/or more sustainable joint investments made by the district stakeholders. The JDDC Forum could proactively identify and activate these synergies and avoid duplication.



Figure 2: UC Secretary Taj Mohammad at LSO Etihad Office, UC Lahore.

**“If only the district stakeholders would have coordinated their investments and efforts better, then my wife would still be alive”** says Abdul Hayee, a community representative from Pishin.

This heartbreaking statement was made when the wife of a Local Support Organization representative passed away because primary health facility at Kamalzai was not operational and timely medical assistance could not be provided to his wife.

Mr Abdul Hayee added that “this happened to many other women”. He added that “later on, I raised the issue of our dilapidated health facility in the JDDC. On the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, District Health Officer approached provincial health authority and upgraded the health facility into Basic Health Unit and handed over it to PPHI who turned the facility into fully functional BHU with doctors, para medical staff, medicines and other health facilities available. Our LSO representatives were following up, coordinating and facilitating the entire process. Now, the poor rural women are treated in this BHU and they do not need to visit secondary or tertiary hospital in the urban areas”.



Figure 1. Mr Abdul Hayee sharing his JDDC

In his opinion and with relevance to the JDDC, Mr. Abdul Hayee concluded that, “better public service delivery, in similar manner can be achieved, through collaboration between the bottom-up community identification of the service delivery issues and top-down government intervention in resolving service delivery issues”.

BRACE Program triggered JDDC forums in nine BRACE targeted districts. These JDDC forums are being streamlined through the development of standardized guidelines and templates followed by a capacity building and on job technical assistance by the BRACE Program.

**“JDDC can bring radical changes and can be an innovative forum to figure out the community issues and problems”,** says Mr. Shah Faisal

Mr. Shah Faisal is President of District-LSO Network District Kech. He appreciates representation in the Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) forum initiated by the Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Program, where they can raise actual and main issues with the help of LSO network representation in the JDDC.

Quoting a success story, Mr. Shah Faisal President DLSO Network shared that “our village (houses and agriculture

land] is located on western side of the Chapkol river. There used to be rain floods destroying their houses and crops. Being member of the JDDC forum, I raised the issue in the JDDC forum in its meeting held dated 29 Sep 2021 where the Sub Divisional Officer, Irrigation Department responded that the Chapkol River area was surveyed and building of the protection wall was started. However, the Irrigation Department started constructing a flood protection wall on eastern side of the river instead of the western side.



Figure 1. Shah Faisal during community meeting on the issue

The Department did not take the people of the area in confidence and started constructing the protection wall on

*the eastern side of the Chapkol River instead of the Western”.*

On Mr Shah Faisal request at the JDDC Meeting, the JDDC treated the issue as urgent and called a meeting and constituted a committee including representation from the District LSO Network and LSO members Koshk Buleda and the notables of the area. The committee contacted the contractor and had a negotiation with Irrigation Department. The committee convinced Irrigation Department to do a survey before constructing further the flood protection wall.



Figure 2. Flood Protection Wall Initiated by PHED Department on Eastern Side of the Chapkol River

Mr Shah Faisal concluded that *“finally, a team was sent to the area for a new survey in the presence of District LSO Network & LSO members Koshk Buleda and the notables and the location of the protection*

*wall was shifted from the eastern side of the river to the western side. The people of the area became thankful to JDDC members, District LSO Network & LSO members Koshk Buleda for its untiring efforts”.* He

*further added that similar kinds of issues can be raised in this innovative JDDC forum where the Government authorities take quick actions on our inputs and issues are resolved more swiftly”.*

**“The JDDC connects community in public forums to share ideas, gain insight, encourage public exchange and resolve conflicts”, says Aziz Khan, LSO President, Shah Karez, Loralai.**

*“District Loralai experiences the most severe water shortage and such shortage at village level have been determined as vital issue for the prosperity of district”, shared by Aziz Khan-President of LSO, Insaaf Shah Karez.*

*He added that “most of the existing water infrastructure in rural setup is decentralized based on community water collection point. In our setup, the rapid growth of the population causes shortage of water and community disputes to fulfil the need of water. The same case we faced in union council Shah Karez where EU funded Drinking Water Supply Schemes (CPI) was approved by the community institution but due to the conflict between two villages, the process was halted”.*

*“In the Joint District Development Committee (JDDC) meeting, we presented the issue in front of Deputy Commissioner and line departments where DC Loralai instructed Public Health Engineering (PHE) department*

*and BRSP team to visit the site and submit the report on priority basis”.*

*“On the directions of Deputy Commissioner, a joint team of PHE and BRSP visited the UC and met with the community chiefs where the reservation was shared by the community chiefs/members. It was concluded that both villages need water supply scheme and decided in the meeting that in one village, BRSP would go with the same approved CPI funded by EU and in the second village, while PHE department would give the Drinking Water Supply Scheme (DWSS)*

*and BRSP would assist the department in the solarization process”. Hence, the situation was handled cordially.*

**“We are thankful to DC sahib, PHE, BRSP, and JDDC members for resolving the matter amiably”-**

**Message from one of the community chiefs.**

*Mr. Aziz Khan – LSO president concluded that “we appreciate the community representation in the JDDC forum, triggered by the BRACE Program, where we can express our views and concerns”*



LSO Insaaf Shah Karez members meeting RSPs, UC Shah Karez, District Loralai.



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