

Note for Record

By: Shoaib Sultan Khan
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Subject: Visit to Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO)

Sindh is the first province which accepted the concept of Union Council Based Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Programme and sanctioned Rs. 2.9 billion for implementation in January 2009 in two districts. Encouraged by the pace of implementation of the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) , the provincial government sanctioned implementation of UCBPRP in four more districts in 2010 with an allocation of Rupees six billion.

The Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, personally reviewed the progress of the UCBPRP in the districts of Shikarpur and Kashmore in the month of May where more than 5,000 women came to greet him representing 190,000 women households, so for mobilized by SRSO in the two districts. The Chief Minister was visibly moved and seemed inspired by what he saw and he publicly lauded the achievements of the SRSO led by Dr. Sono Khangharani its CEO.

An innovation introduced by SRSO is the Process Monitoring of the progress of the UCBPRP by an independent institution. The Islamabad based Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) was contracted by the Board of Directors of SRSO to undertake Process Monitoring. SDPI's findings in their third report to the Board, are as follows:

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| - Social Mobilization | 96% households organized |
| - Collective Decision Making | 89% members |
| - VO members chose leaders | 86% cases |
| - VO members falling in PSC 0-18 | 95% |
| - VO Proper Bank Account | 90% |
| - Managerial skills imparted | 86% Managers |
| - Local Book Keepers | 92% |
| - Literate Book Keepers | 91.7% |
| - Minutes, Savings & Pass Books | 91.4% to 95.8% maintained |
| - IGG Beneficiaries 0-11 | 100% |
| - IGG availed by office bearers | 7.4% |

-	Micro Investment Plan prepared	70%
-	Awareness about CIF	90%
-	CIF office bearers beneficiaries	2.7%
-	CIF Recovery on time	100%
-	CIP local labour	67%
-	Material purchased from local market	100%
-	Quality material	88%
-	CPI well maintained	87%
-	Awareness about Vocational Training	85.7%
-	Trainees CO members	100%
-	Trainees employed	2.1%
-	Self employed	46.8%
-	Awareness about Micro Health Insurance	85%
-	Low Cost Housing PSC 0-11	100%
-	Shelterless	100%
-	Local labour	100%

On my field visits, I visited Village Ghulam Haider Khoso in Union Council Rasool Bakhsh Chachar of district Kashmore comprising 63 households with the following poverty profile:

0 – 11	29
12-18	9
19-23	13
24 & above	12

which had organized themselves in 4 community organizations and had saved Rs. 13,635. They had accessed the following interventions of the UCBPRP:

Community Investments Fund	38
Micro Health Insurance	38
Vocational Training	14

Those who had acquired training, had formed a Business Development Group and to date had earned Rs. 20,000. Now the Group has succeeded in establishing direct link with the market and expect to receive much larger orders. The Coordinator of the Programme Khawar Parveen

expects the Group to do well. She has already linked 24 such groups to the market engaged in producing diverse products.

For the whole village provision of drinking water, through a technical innovation, sucking water by four hand pumps from a distance of 2 kms through pipes, was indeed a boon. The women described how they used to bring water from a distance of 2 kms. Except for the maintenance of the hand pump, for which a male member of the village has already received training, the project needs no maintenance with no recurring cost.

There were also 7 houses under construction, each at a cost of Rs. 60,000. The owners were busy building the houses with assistance from their own family members.

An improved and cost effective design based on prefabricated blocks, suggested by Arif Hasan, is also being built in the village.

In the Village Organization meeting, members of all the four COs were present. There was participation from members also in the discussion. The office bearers of the VO, the President and the Manager, did not monopolise the discussion. They facilitated the members to have their say.

The most remarkable development, since my last visit three months ago, was the maintenance of records and book keeping. Every member had updated savings book and each one knew how much savings they have. The VO and CO records were impeccably maintained along with the bank deposit receipts. The Book Keepers had done a splendid job.

The SRSO Management deserves congratulations on bringing about this critical improvement. Hopefully all COs and VOs would ensure similar records and book keeping.

To further improve book keeping, I would suggest that the VO should issue receipts of the savings amount deposited by the CO with the VO. Although record of deposits is being kept by the VO and CO separately, the CO has no documentary proof, by way of receipt from the VO. This should be immediately introduced and SRSO Management should get Receipt Books printed and issued to VOs.

Another matter which needs attention is the remuneration of the Book Keepers. There should be no fixed salary. It should be performance related. A fixed amount per CO/VO accounts updated per visit.

There was an interesting discussion how the village surroundings and interior can be improved to give a presentable look to the village. A number of ideas were floated and it was agreed to develop a village development plan doable by the VO itself with some assistance from the Engineering Section of SRSO.

This was my first visit to an Urban Women Group in Khandkot town. The streets were paved but the drains were choked giving a bad stench. I made an offer of partnership, if the organized communities would take the responsibility of keeping their Mohalla drains clean, SRSO can enter into a partnership offering them interventions which would help them address their problems of employment through income generating grants (IGG) and community investment fund (CIF) and vocational training. Health can be taken care by micro health insurance and of course by sanitation through their effort. There was a very positive response from the over 300 women assembled to this offer of partnership. A sustainable arrangement would be when the Mohalla or lane groups instead of offering to keep the drains clean themselves, engage and pay someone on a permanent basis to keep the drains clean.

The Vocational Training Centre in Kandkhot was buzzing with activity and women were busy learning different crafts linked to market demand. It is only through Tracer Surveys, the efficacy of the training could be determined. SRSO is already engaged in doing so of the nearly 10,000 persons already trained.

There was a first dialogue at village Fateh Mohammad Lashari in Union Council Dinpur district Jacobabad. This is the new district where GoS has expanded UCBPRP. There were 93 households present whose poverty score card (PSC) was as follows:

0 – 11	15
12 – 18	21
19 – 23	16
24 & above	41

I introduced the approach of UCBPRP and asked them if they were prepared to fulfil their obligations, namely, (i) getting organized in 15-20 household groups; (ii) identifying honest and

competent leaders as president and manager from amongst themselves and accepting obligations of regular meetings, savings and human resource development. Many women raised their hands to take the responsibility of organizing the households in COs and indicated the date and time to the SRSO Social Organizer to visit them to discuss in detail the requirements of a sustainable organization. As to what the SRSO would do for them, if they get organized, I suggested once organized, their office bearers of COs can visit adjoining districts of Shikarpur and Kashmore to see what organized COs and VOs are doing in partnership with SRSO.

My field visit to SRSO was most heartening and satisfying for me and I congratulate Sono and his team for not only the Presidential Award which Sono has got but that he truly deserved it.