

SRSO'S CAPACITY BUILDING BRINGS SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN LIFE OF AZRA

"There were times when the fear of going out of the house could bring defamation and allegations for the family as well as for me also" said Ms Azra Daughter of Mohammad Yasin (Police Constable) of Hameedabad Mohalla, Gagri village, Khairpur, living in very confiscated atmosphere where people have much time to poke their noses into other people lives and matter which shows there backwardness.

She is 17, student who can be considered as pioneer for bringing change in the environment and mindsets of her fellow villagers.



Ms. Azra

Azra's family comprises of four sisters, a brother and her parents. Female Education is seriously discouraged and in case somebody wants to give education to their children, they are not treated as respectable. Her elder sister, Shagufta, was the first and the only girl who started schooling among 40 boys in the village Middle School for boys. For this act of courage, the whole family faced lot of opposition and allegations but her parents remained determined and enrolled Azra in School as well. Azra and her younger sister proved bright students that they also got Scholarship of Rs.1000/ each, from their school for which they bought two goat kids and raised it.

Under Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme, SRSO Mobilization Team on its mission to target the poorest, visits her village in year 2009 but the team found the atmosphere and circumstances very tense and difficult as they were being not allowed to meet any female villager at first. In this uptight situation Azra's father took a bold step and offered the SRSO team, his house to talk to the female villagers of village.

Bingo' this is a good chance to tell these deprived and impoverished villagers about SRSO's initiatives and aim to empower these down trodden communities both socially and economically especially the rural females and children.

The team mobilized the female community members and gradually the environment takes turn and now these rural women were given a task to convince their male members of the community about SRSO initiatives and objectives. Along with some women, Azra's mother took the leading role and she goes from door to door to talk to the male members of the village and tries to persuade them. Surprisingly on their next visit to the village Hameedabad the SRSO Mobilization team was amazed by the warm welcome by both male and female members of the village. SRSO team discusses their community problems as if they were their own and these people were told to get organized and united to solve their problems and soon a community organization 'Hameedabad' was formed with 26 members HHs.

Azra becomes an active member of this CO. SRSO introduces vocational and technical training courses for the poor and distressed women along with micro credit facility. Moreover the Mobilization Team also did survey using poverty score card for targeting poor.

Azra scored 24 and applied for a Vocational Training in Machine Embroidery and qualified TNA. "I am very happy to be the first female to go out of the village and take proper training from SRSO Vocational Center in the city" says Azra with great smile on her face.

"I am interested to learn skill of Embroidery to raise some extra income for my family" adds Azra. Going out of the village for one month training was again a bold initiative. People again resisted but SRSO team mobilized them and took them in confidence.

Community agreed to send one woman to accompany Azra for the whole month of training. Azra made the same request to SRSO office Khairpur and it allows her to do so as Azra's case is a test case for the whole community of her area against all odds, opposition and no support. Her parents took a bold decision to allow her daughter to take training outside the village.

After availing the Vocational training, Azra sold 02 goats of her' and her sister's they raised from their school Scholarship money and bought Embroidery Machine of her own. Now the time has come to use training in real.

Initially Azra did all the embroidery work for free of cost to gain people's confidence. The village women bring their own threads and clothes. Gradually, people started taking

more interest in her work now and their impressions and mindsets about the Outer World starts changing as they see progress and confidence in Azra's personality.

The same villagers, who objected all this change of scenario, are coming to her house for stitching and embroidery work now. The wonders of training can be easily seen in Azra case as she became a pioneer for change, through SRSO facilitation, for all the people in her area.

At present, Azra now charges Rs 150/- to Rs. 200/- per suit enabling her to save Rs 500-900 in a month. She has continued her studies and interested to get Advance Machine Embroidery to further increase her income. "People have changed their views now and they also respect me and my family more" Azra continued with pride. Her elder sister Shagufta is also interested to get SRSO training in Sewing Machine's Hardware skill (maintenance).

The villagers are accepting this new light of change in their darker lives and are more interested in empowering women. SRSO's initiative has not only changed the lives of Azra and her family but it has given awareness to the down-trodden and underprivileged people who had locked their minds and future in the darkness.