

Local Initiatives in Development



SPO
Strengthening
Participatory
Organization

اداره استحکام شرکتی ترقی

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Bridging Gaps Aligning Political Manifestos with Needs of the Constituents

SPO's commitment to capacity building on human rights issues extends not only to development organizations but also to political Parties and their manifestos. SPO is influencing political representation in order to align political manifestos with the needs of the constituents. SPO is capacitating political party workers in order to better represent and serve their communities. SPOs success is in getting the voices of the underserved heard in the highest corridors of power.

Muzafargarh, one of the oldest and most important districts of Punjab, has a total area of 8249 kilometers, with a population of approximately 2.7 million. A majority of the population resides in rural areas, working in the agricultural sector. Muzafargarh's population presents a bleak picture in terms of socio-economic indicators despite its agricultural importance, the revenue this district generates for Punjab and the consistent political representation this district has had for years both at the State and Provincial levels. One important issue this district faces is that of a low literacy rate (26%) which falls well below the far from desirable average literacy rate of Punjab (56%). This further points to another issue and that is of the gender disparity in education in Muzafargarh. Feudal system is prevalent in this region and little has been done by the feudals, who are also the politically powerful, for the basic rights of education, health and other social benefits for their constituents.

Recognizing the gap between the political representation and the needs of the constituents, SPO took a number of initiatives. The initiatives aimed at capacity building of political party workers to enable them to identify and address the developmental issues of their district and to effectively integrate democratic values in their party structures. SPO engaged a number of different political parties including Muslim league (N), Pakistan Peoples Party, Muslim League (Q) and Jamat-e- Islami. A capacity building program was initiated to educate political party workers/ representatives about basic human rights issues prevalent in their district. To achieve these ends, a Steering Committee was formed by SPO during these trainings, which was responsible for prioritizing the issues of human rights that were directly affecting the people of Muzafargarh. Thereby, the first and foremost issue identified was regarding the use of 10,375 acres (415 muraba) of land donated by influential landlord Sardar Korey Khan to district government on 5th October, 1894, for the betterment of the local population, especially provision of education to poor children of the area.



The district government had not utilized the land for what it had originally been intended. Rather, the land was being used to serve the affluent population of Muzafargarh by establishment of expensive English medium schools in each tehsil and were named after Sardar Korey Khan. Some of the donated land was also under illegal possession of defaulting tenants. Whatever income came in from the land was going into the pockets of corrupt officials. In order to address the pertinent problem, the District Steering Committee (DSC) formed a research committee, which conducted district level research to gather information about the utilization of the land by the district government. Research findings clearly revealed that the land was not serving the community at large and therefore, was of little value to the majority population of Muzafargarh.

Following the investigation into the matter, DSC, organized a dialogue to share the research findings with relevant stakeholders such as the District Nazim, MPAs and MNAs. The participants shared that they had not been aware of the situation prior to the dialogue and were willing to take radical measures for the resolution of the issue. A comprehensive strategy was formulated through consultation to

ensure that income from the donated land was best utilized in the future.

Thereafter, the committee launched an advocacy campaign whereby the issue was highlighted through electronic media, with a focus on local television channels. In response to the campaign, Commissioner D.G.Khan Division called a meeting of concerned district officials to devise a strategic plan for efficient utilization of the donated land. The commissioner also took action against the individuals who had illegally captured the land. As a result of this activity, over 84 cases were filed and more than PKR 0.4 million were recovered. With regards to auctioning of the land, the commissioner facilitated the district government in attaining sanction of bylaws from District Assembly Muzafargarh. He then teamed up with the district government for the effective implementation of these laws. The auction was openly telecasted on local cable networks to ensure maximum participation of the local population. Another benefit of this campaign was that the lease rates of the land increased from PKR 1000 to PKR 18,000; a substantial increment of 1800%. As a result of the rigorous efforts of political parties and SPO, the income from the donated land

has increased from a mere PKR 1.6 million to an outstanding amount of PKR 13.4 million.

The commissioner's commitment to the cause has been pivotal for the cause as he ensured the people that all illegalities from the leasing process of the land will be removed and land income will be enhanced through a proper leasing and collection system. Transparency is being ensured by the district government by adding a member of the CSN on the auction committee which will lease out the land. Owing to the successful advocacy campaign, the District Steering Committee Muzafargarh has been successful in effective utilization of income from the donated land for the development and progress of the deserving people of Muzafargarh.

2



Data Driven Decision Making for Informed Policy

In compliance with its outcome 1000, SPO has taken initiatives to carry out research on health and education related issues in the most neglected parts of Pakistan. The rationale behind such initiatives is to encourage data driven policy making and research oriented decision making by stakeholders. SPOs role in organizing surveys on

education in 5 districts of Hyderabad has provided primary data on enrolment, closed schools, girls' enrolment, teacher absenteeism etc. Strong alliance has been established with partner organizations POs in Hyderabad as a result of a successful advocacy/mobilization campaign following the research survey. The two

prong strategy in this particular case resulted in reopening of 206 schools in the 5 surveyed districts, ensured political commitment and ensued a sense of co-operation for a shared cause among stakeholders.

SPO has committed itself to enhancing capacity of community organizations and public interest institutions to exercise and promote democratic governance and structures at all levels. The major objective of their program (outcome 1000) is to develop the capacity of community based organizations and political workers





to raise awareness about human rights and good governance within their communities; to monitor the human rights and governance situation; to promote democratic norms; and ensure transparency and accountability within their organizations and parties. This outcome is to be achieved by POs and political organizations through different community based interventions. "Chotti" (small) funding is a facilitation effort whereby, SPO provides small financial assistance (grant of rupees 20,000/=) to partner organizations POs to organize/plan projects that meet the partner organization's objectives in connection with outcome 1000.

SPO believes and propagates, like all concerned stakeholders, among its partner organizations that education is a basic human right and sees good governance as a prerequisite for ensuring community access to quality education. SPO-Hyderabad and its POs in line with the larger SPO mission identified the lack of research on education demographics in Hyderabad as a problem and prioritized the need for finding facts about the problems in the education sector faced by the people of Hyderabad. "Choti" funding was utilized for research and data collection on the

proposed study on the status of education in the target area. *The rationale behind this study was that it would provide the factual base behind district level policy dialogues on education and advocacy activities in this regard.* SPO and POs agreed upon a two pronged strategy in order to utilize the funds in the most effective way. Half of the funds were dedicated to designing, implementing and presenting the research survey and the other half to mobilization around the findings of the research. SPO team provided technical assistance in development of the concept paper for the activity, survey forms and data analysis. 50 partner organizations collected data from 48 Union Councils of 5 districts of Sindh i.e. Ghotki, Shikarpur, Matiari, Tando Mohammad Khan and Hyderabad. 48 research booklets were published by the partner organizations based on the study findings.

The research findings were shared with the stakeholders in mobilization events. All the 50 POs conducted awareness raising events to share their findings regarding the status of education, enrollment, teacher absenteeism, closed schools, girls' enrollment, missing facilities etc. Participation of all the stakeholders such as the Education

department, school management committees, supervisors, head teachers of schools, teachers' associations, political representatives, media and the other local influentials was ensured. The booklets were shared with at least 50 key stakeholders including Ministry of Education, Secretary of Education and the MPAs and MNAs of the area. Follow-up on agreed actions by the stakeholders, especially department of education, in the mobilization events was regularly done by SPO LRP (Local Resource Persons) and district level civil society networks.

As a result of this joint data driven pro-active advocacy campaign, 206 closed schools were opened in all 5 districts. Linkages of partner organizations were strengthened with the government and also their visibility increased at the district level. The two pronged strategy has created an environment for data driven decision making and informed policy making by policy makers. It has also increased accountability of the government and other key actors to play their role efficiently given that the research survey has identified the gaps and these gaps have been shared openly with everyone.

3



Early Marriage – A societal Curse!

SPO's presence in the remotest parts of Pakistan has enabled it to identify many issues that women face in these areas. The crimes against women are of varied nature but one that is most widespread in Sindh is selling of minor girls in marriage to older men. SPOs presence along with its partner organizations in areas with these ill practices has brought a ray of hope for many girls like Zeenat and Shama whose story we are sharing with you. SPO's brave workers have provided support and guidance to young women in distress. SPOs workers have used their advocacy skills and mobilization techniques effectively to unite an informed civil society which is responsive to young women in dire need. Raising voices against ill social practices such as selling minor girls in marriage has successfully paved way for the community

to see the injustice involved in such social customs. SPO takes pride in the trust that the community, especially women, has placed in it by reaching out to it when in distress and the expectations they have developed from SPO of providing them guidance and support in order to change the predicament they are in.

"Although the women of my neighborhood and family curse me for taking this step, I am relieved that I have finally escaped the dilemma I was suffering in. I am extremely thankful to SPO who showed me a way and helped me get out of this violent situation."

Sham

The story of Shama Notihaar, a 15 year old girl, of village Dadoo Mori, is the story of thousands of young girls from Sindh. Owing to the traditional patriarchal norms, evils such as domestic violence, honor killings and selling of young girls to elderly men in marriage are commonly accepted social practices. Female literacy rates are

one of the lowest (4-5%) in Taluka Bulri Shah Karim, where Shama's village is located. Heinous crimes and practices against women are never reported and therefore little statistics are available to assess the expanse of crimes against women.

Shama was a victim of early marriage and that to a man over 73 years her senior. Her family lived in wretched poverty and perpetually failed to make ends meet. Financial issues pressed Shama's father into selling her to a man over 90 years of age named Sikander Dars, from district Tharparkar, in marriage. Shama's mother was unable to bear

this injustice, and lost her sanity, soon after the marriage. A distraught Shama moved in with her husband, only to become a victim of domestic violence. After one month into marriage, Shama visited her family to participate in the marriage ceremony of her cousin Zeenat, aged 12 years, who was also being sold to an 80 years



old man of the Khosa community. The case of Zeenat's marriage, unlike unfortunate Shummas', did not go unnoticed. Zeenat's marriage was reported by a Local Resource Person (LRP) to both SPO and the police. The SPO team along with Partner Organizations (POs), CSNs and the LRP visited Zeenat's house to draw her family's attention to the injustice involved in this marriage. Police arrested the groom and her father on the day of the wedding, thus, preventing the marriage from taking place.

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Shama saw a ray of hope for herself when she witnessed the events that led to Zeenat's freedom from the wedding. Shama felt that she too could change her fate and get out of the marriage she had been forced into. She chose to share her plight with women activists from SPO's team and focal person of PO. Steadfast in her quest for justice, Shama contacted SPO LRP (who reported Zeenat's case), who lived

in the same village as her, requesting his support. Given Shumma's situation of already living under the watchful eye of her cruel husband, the LRP advised her to hold a press conference with help from SPO to gain support from stakeholders and media. Together they contacted SPO-Regional Office Hyderabad and held a press conference at Tando Mohammad Khan press club, where Shama publicly shared the injustice that she had faced and demanded freedom from the contract of marriage that bound her with a cruel old man. In this process, PO Bulri Education, Health and Rural Development of Bulri Shah Karim also greatly supported Shama's efforts to attain justice.

Owing to Shumma's bravery and resolve to gain freedom, The LRPs guidance and the persistent efforts of media and civil society, Shama got her freedom in the form of a divorce. Although, her ex-husband Sikander Dars still sends Shama and her family vengeful messages, her high and freed spirit remains undeterred.

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difference in Shama's life. Furthermore, owing to this particular case, a rights based approach has been instilled in the community, who has begun to realize that social evils such as selling of young girls in marriage should be condemned. The locals have also learned that through collective action of state and non-state actors they can put an end to these practices. Shama's case has provided other victims of early marriage awareness of their rights and has shown them the possibility of escaping their unjust situations.



Institutionalizing Efforts of Eradicating Violence Against Women through Public Private Partnership

SPO has human rights as an over arching theme for all of its core programmes. Women Rights fall under the rubric of human rights and are a key focal area for SPO. The plight of women rights in Pakistan present a particularly bleak picture owing to the patriarchal norms and widely held view of women as inferior to men. SPO is challenged with grave issues facing women in its operational districts, to which, it has responded by issue specific program interventions that meet specific needs of an area.

Violence against women is a widespread menace in Pakistani society. It plagues not only rural but the urban population, as well. Violence against women exists in many forms ranging from physical to psychological. The Human Rights Declaration of the UN claims gender equality and binds all signatories of the declaration to ensure women are protected by law

and equality for them is made certain. Pakistan, despite being a signatory, is failing in ensuring the declaration demands for women's protection against all forms of violence. Violence against women has neither been prevented by law nor has it been curtailed by law enforcers. The role of the police is particularly poor in response to the widespread occurrence of crimes against women.

The plight of women in Tando Muhammad Khan, a district in Sindh, is not any different from that in other parts of the country. Women face violence on day to day basis and majority of the cases go unreported because this type of violence is not seen as a crime, nor is it paid attention by the police. SPO realizing this pressing issue of violence against women, in the district, initiated a special program for awareness raising on this issue amongst the community, especially women. SPO selected Local Resource Persons LRP from 10 villages and introduced the REFLECT circles in the villages. SPO, through these circles, orientated partnering women with their rights and trained and capacitated them to

work towards larger awareness raising and mobilization of the community. Theatre programs were organized by SPO in communities to highlight the issues of women. This intervention aimed at raising awareness on women rights in the community. Since women participation has always been a challenge, in the rural communities, SPO Hyderabad adopted special strategies to increase women participation in linkage meetings, lecture programs and advocacy campaigns. SPO's LRPs also identified cases of heinous crimes against women in the district and reported them to the police, thus, gaining some support by law enforcers in response.

An important issue hampering the improvement of women's security situation, in the district, is the poor receptivity of the police, and poor reach out law enforcers have to the community because of which majority of incidents of violence against women go unreported. SPO in its efforts to empower women and provide them security met up with police officials continuously to discuss the issue of violence against women in the target area. SPO



proposed establishment of a special “complaint cell”, exclusively for women and run only by policewomen. The idea was to create a safe and comfortable environment for the women in distress to share their plight and demand justice.

The District Program Officer DPO considered this suggestion by SPO team, resultantly, a women complaint center was established in the district. A help line was also established for the convenience of women unable to come to the center and also two women head constables were appointed to run the center. This center made it easier for women to report cases of violence. Through record keeping of cases of certain nature and follow up by the DPO and other concerned organizations, cases were handled by the police in collaboration, which added an element of accountability of the police at some level.

SPO went a step further by organizing gender sensitization workshop as part of a police training event, in which, 6 lady police constables participated and were sensitized on issues pertaining to women and ways to deal with women victims of violence. SPO also provided computers to the

complaint center for computerizing the data system and maintaining up to date record of cases of violence in the district.

The establishment of the “women crises cell” has been a great contribution of SPO and its partners, since it has created a safe avenue for women in distress to report crimes against them. It has also ensured that the civil society, in partnership with the law enforcers, remains involved in the process of providing justice to women victimized by violence.



5



Saving the Livelihood of Fisherfolk

SPO is among the few organizations in Pakistan that work on environmental issues and policies. SPO's approach is participatory and involves partnering with local communities whose livelihoods and environment is adversely affected by uninformed policy making at the government level. SPO has provided shadow support to communities and has organized discussion forums to bridge the communication gaps across policy makers, politicians, local communities and other stakeholders. The organization's strategy involves empowering local communities who are direct effectees of mis-guided government policies and other social problems. SPO aims to increase awareness, create strong partnerships at the grassroots level and run strong and well designed advocacy campaigns. SPOs consistent advocacy efforts

and lobbying has resulted in the adoption of consultative policy drafting processes which have brought to the forefront interests of local communities who are otherwise left out of any policy making process in Pakistan. The success of SPO as an organization lies in building strong and long lasting partnerships with the communities at the grassroots level and identifying and developing local leadership. This in turn, enables the communities to get their issues highlighted and addressed at the right forums and helps them work towards achieving the desired outcomes in terms of policies and programs beneficial for them.

SPO has made a conscious choice to work within the fishermen's community in Baluchistan to address their environmental concerns and problems relating to their livelihood. The Baluchistan

coastline spans some 750 Km and stretches from the Iranian border in the southwest to the Sindh province. Fishery is the main means of livelihood in this area and the two districts of Gwadar and Lasbela coast alone are home to 800,000 fishermen, some of whom make a respectable living from this profession. The seemingly endless bounty of the sea and the associated opportunities to make a decent living has attracted large numbers of Baluchis to this Makran Division in search of livelihood.

However, during 2000-2010, the productivity of the area greatly declined when the Government of Pakistan started issuing licenses, at the nominal rate of PKR 40,000, to national and international trawlers. The primary focus of the capitalist companies was revenue generation; regardless of the adverse impact their activities had on the host environment or the native population. To catch a larger load, huge nets were used which captured fish of all sizes (even smaller fish with zero market value), as well as plankton and other marine creatures that ensure maintenance of the eco system. As a result, between 2000 and 2010, the trawlers caught between 40-400 million fish, but the monetary profits were not for the poor local fishermen and over-fishing caused



massive damage to the flora and fauna of the sea. Adding to the problems for this region was the "Diesal Mafia" during this decade, which was carrying out illegal transportation of diesel from Iran to Karachi. Many diesel spills from the ships smuggling in diesel caused drastic impact on sea life and subsequently the lives of the fishermen.

In response to this issue, SPO collaborated with the local community of Gwadar and Lasbela districts to form the Baluchistan Mahigar Network (Baluchistan Fishermen Network) in 2005 to address the challenges faced by the local fisherman. The organization initiated an advocacy campaign to raise awareness about the rights of fisherman and to protest against the trawler and diesel mafia. These efforts proved instrumental in gaining the attention of institutional/ governmental stakeholders and decision makers. SPO provided rights based awareness trainings to BMN representatives so they could lead a joint fishermen community of Gwadar and Lasbela to advocate for their rights.

In May 2009, SPO members from Sindh and Baluchistan region (mainly Turbat and Karachi) united the fishermen at the Pakistan Fisher

Folk Forum, to initiate collective action against the trawler and diesel mafia. The Chairperson of the Forum was taken on a tour of the coast, providing the local fishermen an opportunity to raise their concerns and issues. At the end of the tour, a seminar was conducted in Gwadar where the leaders of the Fisher Folk Forum and fellow fishermen presented their grievances. By mutual consensus it was decided that the local fishermen from Sindh and Baluchistan would be facilitated to meet and discuss pertinent issues and work together to develop solutions and decide on the way forward for the forum. The two provincial fishermen communities then conducted a two day consultative workshop to draft a new fishermen policy, which was presented to local and governmental stakeholders, including fishermen, Minister-Agriculture and Livestock, Ministers and the Provincial/ Federal Secretary.

Following a successful workshop comprising fishermen nominees from Turbat and Karachi, the draft policy was presented to 500 fishermen, civil society and government officials the next day. SPO and BMN's consistent efforts were successful in winning the political commitment of Baluchi

Ministers present at the occasion. Political leaders announced that a committee would be formed comprised of government officials, SPO, BMN and Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum in order to pursue the issue and push for the policy draft. The partnership across the aforementioned stakeholders also resulted in formation of a District Steering Committee in Gwadar, comprising representatives from six political parties. Their main agenda was safeguarding the ecosystem and addressing the problems faced by local fishermen. BMN/ SPO collaborated with DSC Gwadar to conduct a follow-up visit to Quetta for policy discussion. The delegation also met up with parliamentarians from different political parties, Fishers' Secretary and the Chief Minister. The following week, the policy was presented in the Assembly by Minister- Fishery Mr. Zahoor Ahmed Baladai, and after detailed debate, voting was conducted. Accordingly, the fishermen community were categorized and registered as workers. The policy has yet not been officially accepted but the consistent efforts of BMN and the local fishermen seem promising in this regard.

6



Local Resource Person – Agent for Social Change

SPO's Local Resource Persons are a fleet of dedicated young men and women committed to the cause of bringing social and economic uplift in their communities. Trained well on human rights, good governance, social justice and peace and harmony, these men and women set out to establish Learning Centers in their communities. These LCs serve as adult literacy centers, awareness raising forums, as forums for interaction and problem sharing and also as vocational/skill training centers for economic uplift of the most disempowered community members, especially women in rural areas.

Robina Kanwal belongs to village Wah Bachran situated in Mianwali District. Robina has received secondary education from Govt Gilrs High School Wah Phejra and is 20 year of age. Robina shares the story of her being selected as a SPO Local Resource Person with a lot of

zeal. She shares that she never had any interest in embroidery work as a young school girl, which was very unlikely among girls around her like her sister. The craft of embroidery is considered "future oriented and a permanent source of income" in her household and Robina was constantly reminded of the importance this skill holds in the lives of women of her community. Robina joined a vocational training center, set up by SPO, when she was still a student of 10th grade. The reason behind this shift in her professional choice came because her sister was inundated with work at the center and was not making enough wages to meet the household needs. Robina found the instructor at the center motivating and inspiring, thus, she began enjoying her learning experience at the center. In addition to acquiring the skill of embroidery, she also attended other meetings and trainings, especially designed by SPO, for the learning center.

Once Robina matriculated both from school and the learning center, she began taking orders from clients along with her other colleagues from the center. These women were mostly getting orders

from the well to do Malkania (wives of local land owners and feudals) of Wah Phejra. The embroidery orders were demanding but the wages for the work minimal. Robina saw the injustice in this and wished that she would get wage according to the hard work she puts in to her work. She discussed her wish with her sister and requested her to get in touch with a non-governmental organization that might take up this issue. She sought guidance and support from an organization in looking for a good/fair market for her work, where she would receive wages according to her demanding work.

Robina's sister had worked with SPO and she herself was a member of a PO of SPO. Both sisters had attended workshops by these partnering organizations, and had benefited from the knowledge they had gained in them. Robina especially valued her training on human rights. Robina saw an opportunity for herself, when a position for a LRP in Wah Phejra presented itself. None of the local girls wanted to go for a training in Lahore, but Robina found this to be a great opportunity for broadening her horizons and to materialize her



wish for fair wages. Robina was selected for the training, which she found very informative and later was selected as a SPO LRP. Robina was selected for her readiness to learn, enthusiasm for change and for her commitment to the work of SPO. She proved herself even worthier of her position as a LRP, when she was faced with issues from some members of the community, creating hurdles in her efforts to establish a Literacy Center LC in Wah Phejra.

The community members were opposed to the establishment of the LC and did not want to send their daughters there. However, with Robina's consistent efforts to win the trust of the community and establish a LC with good reputation, she gained confidence in her own abilities and also women participation increased at the LC once they realized the learning opportunities being offered to them. A Women Group was formed later which wanted the LC to be turned into a vocational learning center, where women could also learn the skill of sewing and embroidery for increasing opportunities of economic empowerment. SPO gave a grant to Robina's WG of Rs 80,000, which was used for purchasing sewing machines for the women at the LC, which would increase livelihood

opportunities for the women.

To Robina's utter dismay, some jealous community members out of spite spread a rumor about her receiving this grant in reward for a dance she performed in Lahore. Robina had gained enough confidence by now and also the support of other women around her to take the brave of step of taking legal action against those who had tried to taint her name. Robina had learnt about the harassment act in SPO trainings and had also learnt the kinds of legal options available for her in circumstances of harassment she had been subjected to. The fear of legal action pressurized those who were responsible for spreading the rumor, to come to Robina's place, asking for forgiveness. Robina was not willing to forgive them for the psychological stress they had caused her and her family, but these people were bent on diffusing the situation so that they would not be faced with legal action. Eventually, after several attempts of bringing village influentials with them and mobilizing hundreds of villagers in hopes of getting forgiveness from Robina and her family, Robina's father pressed her to concede because he felt that the perpetrators had felt remorse and genuinely wanted forgiveness from her,

This event boosted Robina's confidence even more and earned her a lot of respect by the community at this young age. Robina has pulled many girls and women to the LC, who now aspire to be empowered like her. Robina has benefited immensely in terms of her professional life, because she was selected by SLPAB, a PO of SPO, as a skill teacher for their vocational training center, and is earning a handsome salary in comparison to the minimal wages she earned earlier. She expresses her happiness over the change in her life by saying,

"Thank God the darkness of poverty has minimized and now I see the golden ray of hope".

7



Let Her Rest in Peace

A Hindu Girl Buried in a Muslim Graveyard

Muslim Graveyard
SPO is committed to improving the human rights situation in Pakistan. It has partnered with non- governmental and political organizations in its operational districts to create awareness on human rights and train POs on organizing pro-active campaigns around issues of human rights. Minority rights are of utmost importance to SPO and it has taken many steps in the direction of protecting minority rights and providing avenues for minorities to raise their issues. SPO takes pride in the strong partnerships it has developed with many minority representing organizations and cherishes the events when civil society forms a united front for the collective benefit of the underrepresented.

On 29th April 2009 a 13 year old girl "Shahmira" an Oad (Non-Muslim) by cast, resident of village Khuda Bux Chandio Hyderabad, died due to an unknown disease. She was buried in a Muslim graveyard, located in a nearby village, with the permission of local elders. The burial became an issue when a local religious cleric (Mulla), eight months later, proclaimed this burial as an act against Islam. He approached a prominent Mufti and other religions leaders to issue a "Fatwa" that this was an illegal act by non-muslims (Oad) and the dead body of 15 year Shahmira should be removed and taken elsewhere.

Soon after the motivation of the local Mulla, a prominent Mufti issued a "Fatwa" in writing, that the dead body of Shahmira be removed immediately otherwise the "Maghfirat" (forgiveness) prayers for the dead muslims in the graveyard will not be accepted by god. A Fatwa under the Shariah Law becomes binding on all muslims. Immediately after this Fatwa a local court summoned Shahmira's family and gave a verbal verdict that they should remove the dead body of

their daughter from the Muslim graveyard within two days, otherwise, legal action will be taken against them and the body will be removed in the presence of the Police.

Bhej Bhattai Welfare Association BhitShah an SPO Partner Organization, informed concerned officials of SPO-Hyderabad about this issue. SPO-Hyderabad immediately conducted a press conference and presented this case as a human rights issue. SPO-Hyderabad also approached other human rights organizations for their support. Immediately SPARK Hyderabad responded by providing a lawyer for the case, free of cost, who would represent the Oad community. SPO Hyderabad team also tried winning the support of the local community by visiting the burial site and meeting with the local community in order to get their opinion on the matter. In the meantime, Sindh Rural Development Society (SRDS) Matiari (part of SPO Network) organized series of rallies in Hala and BhitShah to support the Oad family and pressurize the decision makers to reconsider their decision. Sindh Rural Development Society also consulted other Mufti's on the matter and one prominent Mufti (belonging to a minority muslim faction) gave a Fatwa in support of



the Oad family (Non-Muslims).

Owing to the pressure of civil society and the united front of all human rights based organizations in Hyderabad, the verbal court verdict was reversed. Following the civil society intervention a legal court procedure was followed when the matter was taken to court with the

Oad family represented fairly. Finally on 10th March 2010, district and session court Hyderabad gave a final verdict and said that in the light of the "Fatwa" given earlier, it is illegal to bury a non-muslim in a muslim graveyard in the future. However, in Shahmira's case both parties had reached a consensus that this girl should not be removed

from this graveyard. This agreement was reached between the Local Mulla and Oad community due to the pressure of civil society organizations.





FATA claims right to play in national games

SPO has reached out to the most troubled parts of the country such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where very few governmental or non-governmental organizations have set out to bring change. SPO has committed itself to highlighting the issues of the marginalized groups, such as the youth in FATA, which is being neglected both by the state and the people with fundamentalist ideology who are against progressiveness and openness to change of the youth. SPO has gained trust of the community of FATA and has formed strong alliance with other civil society organizations to take

measures that can promote peace and harmony in the region.

The Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) comprise of seven Agencies, namely Khyber, Kurram, Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, North and South areas of Waziristan and six FRs (Frontier Regions) namely FR Peshawar, FR Kohat, FR Tank, FR Banuu, FR Lakki and FR Dera Ismail Khan. According to Census of Pakistan 1998, its total population is said to be 3.3 million while the intellectual and political circles of FATA reject this estimate with a claim that FATA has a population of more than 10 million. FATA has

gained much attention over the past 10 years, as a result of its significance in the War on Terror; the alleged presence of Al-Qaida and the Taliban movement in the region; and the relatively recent persistent military offences (drone attacks) in the region which have claimed thousands of innocent lives.

There are a few non-governmental organizations working for alleviating poverty and for peace restoration in FATA. Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) is engaged in the promotion of peace, establishment of good governance and protection of rights of tribal





people. At present, SPO is operational in two Agencies i.e. Khyber and Mohmand. Besides it has also launched its program in four out of six FRs of FATA. SPO has built partnerships with 13 POs of FRs and conducted a major human rights training workshop to build the capacity of its POs. Various important topics were covered in three day long training related to human rights, women rights, children rights, Constitution of Pakistan 1973 and advocacy etc. All the participants took keen interest and went back to their respective FR with a commitment to make use of the newly acquired knowledge.

FATA has been facing many problems which need to be resolved. At the moment, restoration of peace in FATA is of immense importance to the people of FATA and in this regard youth can play a vital and constructive role. FATA over the past 60 years has historically been left out of the mainstream development process by the state. It has been presented as an anarchist region with a history of tribal warfare and bloodshed, and without any culture of sports or the arts. This however, is a misleading image of the region and it needs to be understood that the absence of the arts and sports is a result of several reasons ranging from neglect of the state, brewing

political issues in the region, fundamental ideology overshadowing progressiveness and widespread poverty in the area.

The youth in FATA, like youth elsewhere in the country, are interested in sports which can provide recreation for them and channelize their energies positively. Realizing the interest of youth in sports, the negligence of local and national level authorities towards this interest and few forums for the concerned to raise their voice, SPO effectively used two of its established networks to put forth this issue. The FCSN (FR CSN) and TNC (Tribal NGOs Consortium) are the two major networks formed by SPO for the promotion of peace in FATA, where sports and other recreational activities are promoted to ensure peace & social harmony.

In December 2010, government of Pakistan announced to hold National Games 2010 in Peshawar in which almost all leading teams of the country were invited to play games but FATA which was already a neglected area was excluded. The players of Khyber, Mohmand and all other agencies of FATA including FRs were disappointed with the decision of the government. The member organizations of TNC and FCSN gathered and discussed the issue at length and agreed to plan efforts for inclusion of FATA into the

national games. The leaders of FCSN contacted print and electronic media in this regard. A press conference was held on 19th December 2010, in which players and activists from all parts of FATA enthusiastically participated. They highlighted their concerns in this regard and demanded the inclusion of FATA in the National Games 2010. Media also played a supportive role. As a result Chairman of Pakistan Olympics Association promised to include FATA in the national games. The Federal Minister for sports consequently announced on 20th December the inclusion of athletes from FATA. The national games were held in Peshawar from Dec 25th to Dec 31st, 2010. In the National games 40 players from FATA participated. The players from FATA won a bronze and four silver medals, which is a great accomplishment given their first time participation at this level. The players and their supporters were happy with the initiative of the state in mainstreaming FATA and responding positively to their demand. The opportunity to compete at the national level has encouraged the youth of FATA to work harder in preparation for the next national games and has also encourage other young people to join sports for their well being.



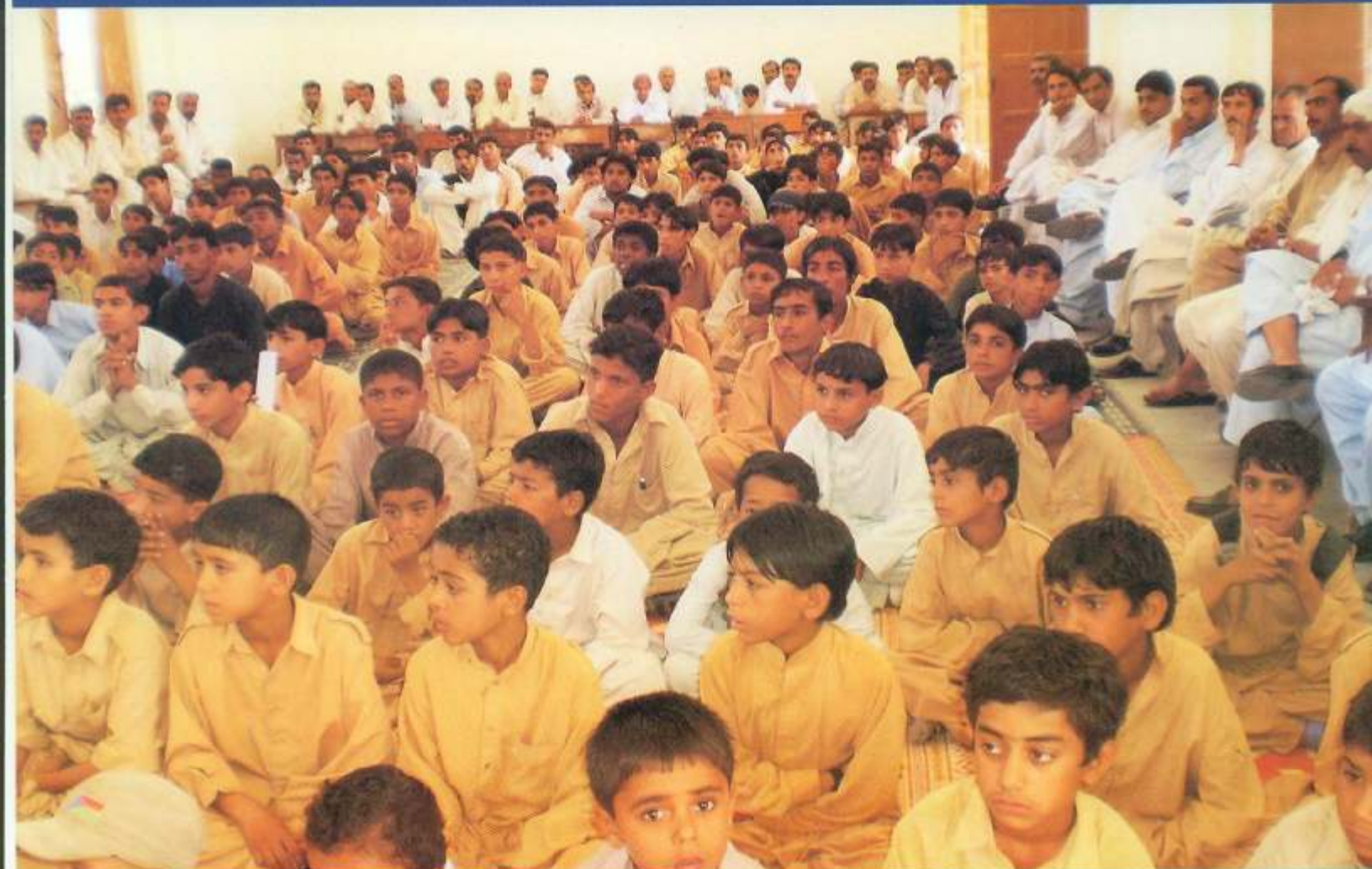
Ensuring Education Rights for All

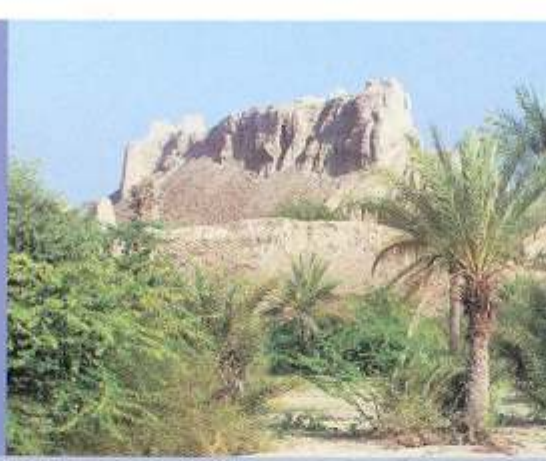
Issue based advocacy has become a distinct feature of SPO and its DSCs strategy towards identifying and resolving issues at the local level. SPO has provided valuable trainings and

support to its partnering organizations POs and networks on conducting issue based advocacy. Resultantly, major break throughs have been made by DSCs and POs in addressing some of the

most pressing needs of their areas.

The Makran division, in Balochistan, is a well populated region lying at a distance from the provincial capital, Quetta. Since Quetta is the center of political, social and economic activity, the distance between the areas causes a number of problems for the local population, particularly students and professionals. For





instance, owing to the absence of an education board in Makran division, regular and private candidates continuously travel back and forth between the cities for any matters related to education, which is neither time- nor cost- effective.

In order to address this pressing issue, the District Steering Committee (DSC), comprised of representatives from six political parties of district Kech, met with SPO representatives and EDO Education Kech, to discuss issues pertinent to the education sector in Kech district. After rigorous consultation, the establishment of an education board at Kech was identified as top priority and efforts were initiated for the accomplishment of this goal. In this regard, it was decided that the committee would meet with parliamentarians and Baluchistan Assembly, in Quetta, to discuss the issue. Invitations were immediately sent to parliamentarians and MPAs. The SPO team, DSC Kech, DSC Gwadar and members from the Civil Activist Forum, media and the Baluchistan Fishermen Network, engaged in a consultation to put together a set of demands that would be presented at the Baluchistan Assembly forum.

These demands were presented before the assembly, where, the

participants included Minister of Industry and Commerce, members of Baluchistan National Party, Provincial Ministers, local leaders of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, senators and MPAs from Baluchistan. Following an introductory presentation of the objectives of the forum, DSC Kech convener briefed the audience about the dire need for the establishment of an Education Board in Makran division. He stated that annually over 18,000 candidates take board exams, who face great difficulty in accessing the education center as they reside at a long distance from Quetta. Thus, candidates have to travel long distances for simple examinations related processes, such as, name correction, re-checking, corrections, roll number corrections and attainment of migration certificate. This results in wastage of time and imposes immense financial burden on the poor families of a majority of the candidates. He further stated that currently there are 15 examination boards in Punjab, 9 in Sindh and 7 in KPK but only 1 in Baluchistan.

With this presentation, DSC launched an advocacy campaign, and invited local political representatives to contribute to the resolution of the issue. As a result of this campaign, the DSCs were

able to muster a great level of support by the political representatives and government officials, who then exerted pressure on the provincial education department to establish a Kech Education Board. Political leaders displayed enthusiasm and members of DSCs Kech and Gwadar announced funding for construction of the Kech Board building. He also called for funds for printing and press related expenses. During the forum, the DSC was also able to gain support of Makran leadership for the issue. Political commitment and understanding of the issue proved instrumental in the establishment of the board and thus, taking care of a serious educational problem causing much trouble to the students of Kech division.

10



Getting Voices Across!

Human rights education and institutionalizing these rights in every aspect of societal life, is an important challenge and goal for SPO. SPO has identified many groups of people who are suffering the most due to lack of human rights awareness and the

consequences of absence of practice of these rights in society. Identification of these groups increases the responsibility of educating and mobilizing these groups around their issues. SPO along with its POs, CSNs, DSCs and partners, has successfully

managed to unite, educate and mobilize the marginalized.

In Mirpur Bhatairo, the central market place of Thatta District, daily wagers including hawkers, cart-carriers, sales-men and general laborers face serious exploitation at the hands of their employers. The concept of minimum wage is





unknown to these hardworking individuals and people who hire them exploit this ignorance. SPO took up this issue of unawareness regarding labor rights among the laborers in Thatta district. In order to address this issue, SPO organized over 60 local laborers under the umbrella of a labor union called 'Goth Sidhar Sangat'.

These local laborers were informed and sensitized about the labor laws promulgated by the state recently. They were sensitized about an important clause of the labor law which makes it mandatory on the employers to offer a minimum salary package of PKR 7000 per month to their employees. They were also sensitized about 'the change' they could induce through peaceful advocacy, in conjunction with to the newly acquired realization of their basic rights. The laborers were motivated to demand, from the Trade Union, a raise in their daily wages from 100 PKR to a minimum of 200 PKR per day.

Thereafter, owing to their felt empowerment, the labor union launched a strike demanding fulfillment of their demands. Initially the trade union resisted the pressure, assuming that the laborers would return to work in couple of days when their families

would suffer from starvation in the absence of the daily earnings. Contrary to the expectations of the trade union and despite the suffering of their innocent children and other family members, the laborers resisted exploitation at the hands of the trade union. Their steadfastness in approach and efforts earned them dividends – the trade union felt handicapped in the absence of their business drivers/the workers, facing severe difficulties in handling day-to-day affairs of their businesses including their clients, stores and shops. This instilled in them the realization that it is in fact their workers who earn a living for them and their respective families and therefore their concerns must be recognized and addressed. The Trade Union accepted their current demands and agreed to fully comply with the state laws related to minimum wage for labor in the future.

11



Women- the most significant, yet unrecognized economic force!

SPO identifies women as the most marginalized and underrepresented population of Pakistan. Therefore, it has committed itself to the economic, social and political

uplift of women and has initiated several programs in its operational districts with a focus exclusively on women empowerment. The unique feature of SPO's programs for

women is that it has introduced the idea of "collective" women efforts to take ownership of issues they face and resolve them in unison.





Women workers, especially labourers, all over the world face huge challenges in the economic sphere. Women are often exploited at work place, given lower wages than men and face sexual harassment at work places. Keeping in mind these discriminatory practices in the economic realm, there is a dire need for a platform where women workers can raise their concerns and lobby for respect of their rights and earn a fair compensation for their labour. Thus, the Mutthida Labour Federation (MLF) from Punjab initiated a process of forming women workers unions in Lahore district. The Union provided a platform for mobilization of women, from the labor class, to voice their basic economic and labor rights.

Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), in line with its agenda of working with marginalized communities for attainment of basic human rights, greatly supported MLF as part of 'labour class women movement'. The movement engages in advocacy and lobbying for the elimination of all discriminatory practices and laws against women which subject women to lower social status in the society.

The focuses of the efforts were on

Punjab, as it is the largest industrial zone of Pakistan, with a majority of labour class women working in a different industries and trades. The project titled 'Formation of Women Workers Unions' was initiated in three districts; Gujranwala, Khushab, and Mianwali in order to strengthen to 'Labour Class Women Movement'.

The main issues that were identified in the abovementioned districts were lack of recognition of women employed in the industrial sector; absence of registration of women employed by the informal sector; low wages paid; and lack of access to social security benefits. In order to address these gaps and lapses, SPO alongside partner organizations (POs) and civil society networks, working at district level allied with MLF Punjab for managerial support and liaison building with working women. The combined efforts of these organizations have brought about a significant improvement in the situation of working women. Currently, more than 600 hundred women workers are members of the unions and membership is on an increase.

The campaign has greatly elevated the spirits of women workers and they believe that collective action will result in substantial alleviation

of their status. Sustainability efforts are central in ensuring a lasting change in attitudes and behaviours of men and women towards women labour. Alliance formation with like-minded organizations, conduction of follow-up workshops, exposure visits and conferences will be required to ensure sustainability of efforts.

The challenges experienced by Pakistani women labourers are common to most developing countries including a majority of South Asian nations. It is hoped that through collective lobbying and forming alliances, Pakistani female labourers will be able to collaborate with women workers unions from other countries to strengthen these organizations at national, regional, and international levels, perceptively. Alliance formation with like-minded organizations, conduction of follow-up workshops, exposure visits and conferences will be required to ensure sustainability of efforts.

12



Women Empowerment- A communal responsibility!

In order to facilitate women victimized by the discriminatory practices prevalent in the society, SPO introduced the concept of Literacy Centers LCs, with the intent of creating safe places for women. The idea behind these centers is to create a space for women where they can get basic education, get educated on basic human rights, acquire vocational

skills for economic empowerment, share and discuss issues with other women in similar situations and also unite with other women to carry out collective actions for improvement of their situation.

Mianwali district lies in the northwest area of Punjab province, with Mianwali city as its capital, having a population of 85,000 inhabitants. Like all other provinces

of the country, misogynist practices are also a norm in this district. Deep patriarchal structures have prevented women in Pakistan from earning their rightful social status. Mianwali District has been a hub of a large number of gender based crimes against women, including Karo Kari (honor killings), selling of young girls to older men, marrying women with the Holy Quran, gang rapes, child marriages and female slavery.

In Mianwali, there have been a number of cases where the police





refused to lodge FIRs in cases of domestic violence. Thus, ignoring domestic violence as any form of crime and increasing women vulnerability in society.

SPO and many other like minded organizations in the district realize that the widespread acceptance of crimes against women, and common occurrence of such crimes, has caused women in the district emotional and physical distress. Women have little access to education and are economically disempowered, which adds to their suffering. Absence of forums or safe places for women to come together and discuss their issues is another feature of women's life, which prevents them from getting their frustrations and dissatisfaction with the status quo out.

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carry out collective actions for improvement of their situation.

SPO along with its POs established 10 Literacy Centers in 10 UCs (Kundian, Mari Indus, Tabi Sar, Kalabagh, Paikhail) of Mianwali district. SPO's team identified areas where women lived in miserable conditions owing to their socially ordained inferior positions. Local Resource Persons (LRPs) were selected in these areas, in consultation with local community at village level. The LRPs conducted a number of capacity building trainings such as ToT, livelihood skills, organizational management, gender and violence against women as well as an orientation on Masalhati Anjuman committee. The adult literacy centers served as platforms to educate local illiterate women on organizing collective action to achieve an equal social status and quality living conditions in the area. They were also provided rights based awareness so that they could stand up against violence and voice their rights.

The rigorous and steadfast efforts of the LRPs paid off; the local women gained knowledge of their rights and felt empowered enough to voice their issues such as domestic violence. Women's access to justice was greatly improved as now they could lodge FIRs and the

cases were handled with gender sensitivity. SPO also provided financial aid for the formation of local women groups, which ensured sustainability of women empowerment efforts to facilitate a long term attitudinal change within the area.

Women's contribution to household income and increased control over resources plays an integral role in elevating their socio-economic position within the household. Thus, SPO established linkages with business communities like Carvaan Crafts, to facilitate women in earning an independent livelihood. Women's engagement in economic activities aimed at challenging conventional discriminatory norms and allowed women more space and freedom to exercise their rights.

The efforts of LRPs were much appreciated within the community. Their dedication and steadfastness to women empowerment is a true inspiration for other women of their community. Their struggle and accomplishments are a testament to the fact that nothing is impossible for those who believe in themselves.

13



Persistence Guarantees Change!

SPO in partnership with its POs has carried out many successful advocacy issues on behalf of the most marginalized communities in Pakistan. The essential ingredients for a successful advocacy campaign include community willingness for change, commitment of all

stakeholders, bringing all stakeholders on board and for consistently advocating the issue that is most pertinent to the social, political and economic uplift of a community.

Gomal Kalan, one of the most under developed villages of Union Council Korai, Tehsil and District

Dera Ismail Khan, is situated at the Tank D.I.Khan road, a distance of approximately 14 Km from the district headquarters. The village comprises 562 households, with a population of approximately 4496 people. A majority of the residents rely on farming, livestock rearing and daily wage labor to earn their livelihood. The region is marked by poor social indicators including lack of health services, illiteracy, poor





sanitation and unavailability of clean drinking water.

Despite its under development, the community realized the importance of education and need for economic and social uplift, thus, demanding education for its children. SPO responded to this demand and under its AMAL Project, the first girl's education facility was established in 1999. During the inception phase of the school, the community established an 'Islahi (correctional) Committee' which was responsible for smooth running of the school. The committee catered to school related social and infrastructural problems, such as, repair and maintenance, motivating the parents for increased enrollment of girls and ensuring regular attendance of teachers etc.

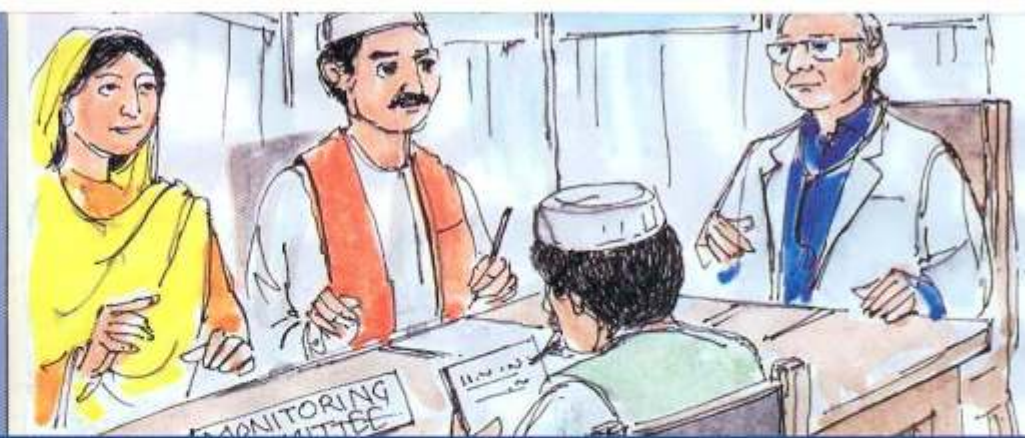
The Islahi Committee thereafter registered themselves as the "Gomal Islahi Tanzeem" (GIT) under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. Eventually, SPO collaborated with GIT, Partner Organizations (POs) and Village Education Committees (VECs) to launch an advocacy campaign for handing over all schools in the area to the provincial government, as education provision is essentially state responsibility. Resultantly, in 2004, after successfully running the

school for five years under the committee, all schools under the AMAL Project were handed over to the provincial government after signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The schools were run by the provincial government through the education department till 2007 but were closed thereafter due to lack of funds. According to GIT, more than 50 girls had completed primary level education till 2007 and approximately 85 girls were enrolled in different classes at the time of closure of the first and only girls school in Gomal Kalan.

At this stage, in order to ensure the continuation of girls' education, SPO launched its core programme in district D.I.Khan in 2009 and included GIT in the District Cluster as a PO. For earning a grant for reopening the schools, three POs including GIT jointly submitted an advocacy proposal for the reopening of 23 AMAL project schools. GIT held consultative meetings with Provincial Member Assembly (MPAs) of their respective constituencies to discuss options for reopening of the closed schools. After two meetings, the GIT was successful in gaining the support of the MPAs. To honor the steadfast and sincere efforts of the PO on the occasion, the MPA stated that

"Although presentation of resolution in the assembly is a very lengthy and complicated process, but keeping in view the commitment and interest of the GIT, I am ready to grant you Government Girls Primary schools for your village".

Thereafter construction work began in August 2009 and was completed in January 2010. The education department ensured the community, at the time, that the school will become functional after summer vacation and the locals will once again be able to educate their daughters. The consistent and rigorous efforts of GIT were pivotal in ensuring that local parents and girls were provided the opportunity to improve their situations by attaining education.



Quality Assurance through oversight and monitoring of public services

SPO under its Democratic Governance programme is trying to strengthen and improve public sector delivery in the areas of health and education. Its strategy in this regard is two pronged, one where it is trying to build a strong relationship with the local governments and providing them support in

their initiatives for improving the public sector; and the other, by strengthening community participation and monitoring of public sector by the community. SPO aims to bridge gaps between the public sector and its beneficiaries i.e. the community.

As part of its right based national outreach programme, SPO facilitated the partner organizations (POs) of Malakand in forming a Civil Society Network in 2008, by the name of Rokhana Sabawoon Network (Bright Morning Network) (RSN). The main objective of the Network was to ensure awareness of and respect for the basic human rights of the people, both at the community and institutional levels. They launched a rights based





campaign focusing on issues directly pertinent to the area such as peace and development. Therein, a variety of activities were conducted such as cultural programs and peace dialogues with diversified groups, sessions on developmental work and mobilization meetings with a number of different stakeholders.

For its rights based campaign, RSN identified Maikhband, a small village twenty kilometers from the main town of Batkhela, as a main target area for development work in light of the dearth of basic facilities in the area. There is only one Basic Health Unit (BHU) and one Middle School in the village, which cater not only to 3000 local inhabitants, but also an additional 5000 people from neighboring villages.

In this regard, RSN organized a development lecture at Maikhband, Malakand Agency in 2009. The session was presided by a local social activist and development practitioner, with the objective of mobilization of the local community to play a central role in the development of their area by ensuring improvement in the quality of services provided by the government.

Following the lecture and discussion, a three member

committee comprising of community members was formed to monitor the BHU and Government Middle School. During their monitoring visits, the committee noted that the rate of absence of doctors, para-medical staff and teachers was alarmingly high, which in turn greatly sabotaged provision of quality education and basic health services. Another issue identified was the lack of support of the district government for the BHUs, including insufficient provision of medicine. To address this pertinent issue, the committee held a series of consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders to design an appropriate advocacy plan for basic education and health rights of the community.

As a result of the successful implementation of the advocacy campaign undertaken by the committee, PPHI committed to lend their support through large scale provision of medicines. The district government also instructed the doctors and female medical technicians to ensure regular attendance. According to the monitoring committee reports, owing to the efforts of the committee, currently approximately 100-120 patients are being treated in the BHU on a daily basis. Similarly, the increased attendance of teachers has directly translated into a decreased student drop out rate. Keeping in view these small scale success stories, SPO is currently trying to work out ways to replicate this model in other social sector service delivery areas.





Ensuring Identity Recognition and Political Participation of the Marginalized

SPO has instilled the importance of research based advocacy among its POs. This has enabled these POs to identify and prioritize the most pressing needs of their areas and build proactive advocacy campaigns around the most essential needs of the communities they serve. The rationale behind the POs capacity enhancement, in the areas of human rights, good governance and community mobilization, is to enable them to empower the marginalized in order to bring positive social and political change in their lives.

Cases from District Lodhran and District Muzafargarh

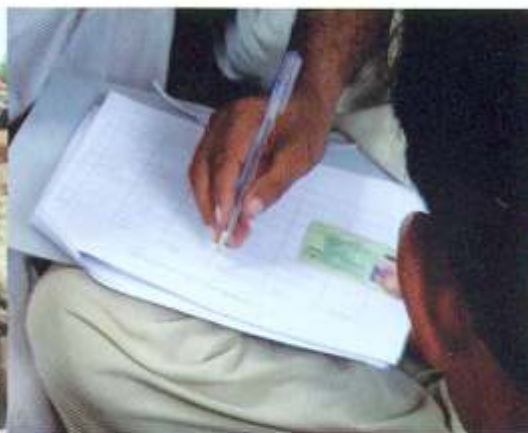
SPO-Lodhran selected Plan Public Welfare Organization PPWO, working in Tehsil Dunia Pur; while SPO- Muzafargarh, selected People Welfare Council Sher Sultan PWCSS based In Ali Pur Tehsil, as their Partner Organizations for capacity building trainings on human rights, good governance and public awareness. The POs after going through the training program are required and expected to work within their communities on issues pertaining to the aforementioned intended outcomes. Regional SPO offices trained PPWO and PWCSS along these lines and selected participants from the organizations for designing an advocacy campaign around a pressing human rights issue in their area.

Surprisingly, The PO members in both these separate SPO interventions in different parts of Punjab, identified lack of awareness on importance and possession of CNIC amongst community members as a common human rights issue of utmost importance in both the

Tehsils. Based on standard trainings, both organizations designed an advocacy campaign around this issue. The premise of the campaigns was that possession of NIC is a basic human right of every Pakistani citizen and it is the citizen's responsibility to attain the NIC once educated on the necessity of the NIC.

The organizations followed a multi-pronged strategy that involved conduction of rapid assessment survey in the areas, focusing especially on women and minorities, meeting with relevant stakeholders (such as local influentials, NADRA officials etc.) to share research findings, Conduction of seminar for raising awareness, allocation of NADRA Mobile Vans and Provision of CNICs.

The rapid assessment survey findings were common among the two Tehsils. In Tehsil Ali Pur, 70% of women and 40% of men did not possess NICs and were unaware of their significance. While in Tehsil Dunia Pur, 53% of the eligible population did not have NICs of which the majority was of women. In response to the findings both organizations organized awareness raising seminars inorder to mobilize the general public to attain NICs. POs simultaneously organized meetings, in their respective



districts, with NADRA officials, local "Namberdars" and district representatives for facilitation in ID card making. These meetings were highly successful as NADRA allocated mobile vans for both union councils. The mobile vans travelled to every village in the union councils to issue NICs for target population.

The combined efforts of SPO and POs in the two districts ensured provision of NIC to the entire eligible population in both the tehsils. Both POs have played an instrumental role in instilling rights based awareness in the community. They have also facilitated the democratic process by providing a basic service like NIC issuance to the underserved at their doorstep and have provided the new NIC attainees the right to vote in the electoral process. The essence of a truly democratic society lies in active participation of citizens in the electoral process as well as political and civic life. The POs plan to further their efforts by educating the communities on the importance of voting in elections.

Case from SPO Hyderabad

One of SPO's major objectives, under Outcome 1000, is to increase participation of youth, women, and minorities in the political processes by encouraging participation in the electoral process through voting. In Pakistan, two main issues hinder such political participation of the masses; firstly, a large population, particularly women, do not possess National Identity Cards (CNICs) which is a precondition for participation. Secondly, a majority of citizens suffer from lack of awareness and political apathy; thus people do not understand or believe that their votes may have any influence on the political and institutional dynamics of the country.

To address these issues, SPO has been working at the national level to increase awareness regarding the importance of voting and formation of CNICs. In line with the aforementioned objective, SPO Hyderabad incorporated the importance of CNIC formation, particularly for women and minorities, as a key activity in the training plan of the POs. Based on this component of their training, the POs with the help of NADRA, facilitated the communities by setting up mobile camps for CNICs formation, with a special focus on women and minorities. NADRA

mobile camps were arranged area-wise in 5 target districts i.e. Ghotki, Shikarpur, Hyderabad, Matiari and Tando Muhammad Khan. Although SPO provided some financial support, the work was mainly carried out on a voluntary basis by the Pos.

The campaign was highly successful with a total of 34,242 CNICs issued, out of which 20,491 cards belonged to women and 7,445 cards were for individuals from religious minorities. Following CNIC formation, voter registration was done and the community was sensitized through awareness events regarding the importance of voting. The success of the campaign was attributed to the steadfast and structured efforts of the POs, in collaboration with SPO.



Empowering women for social change!

SPO is deeply involved in women based issues in all its operational districts. Problems women face in the remotest parts of the country are not characteristic of one region or province, rather, it is a prevailing issue throughout the country. SPO sees empowerment of women through education and livelihood opportunities as essential to change the plight of women in Pakistan. For this SPO has designed unique women empowerment programs that require community participation and rely on local community resources, thus, leaving provision of technical and training support for SPO. Such programs based on community participation ensure community's commitment and ownership and are sustained within communities even in the absence of SPO or its POs.

Muzafargarh, one of the oldest and largest districts of Punjab faces many socio-economic challenges despite its agricultural importance for Punjab and consistent political representation at both the Federal and Provincial levels. Steeped in patriarchal norms, characteristic of our part of the world, Muzafargarh's female population faces many challenges such as early marriages, honor killings, domestic violence, women trafficking and little access to education, health or other basic facilities. The political leadership has done next to nothing for improving the conditions of the female population. Despite efforts of several NGOs operational in the districts, little progress has been made with regards to women empowerment. The reasons for this range from the traditional norms, social barriers to women's progress, lack of political will, widespread poverty and lack of education in general. In such circumstance, SPO has taken upon itself part of the responsibility of empowering women financially and socially, so that women get relief at some level from the deplorable conditions they face.

With the aim of women empowerment, SPO has designed an exclusive program for women, which is being implemented in Union Council Jagat Pur, Muzafargarh. As part of SPO's core programme, ten Local Resource Persons (LRPs) were identified from the Union Council, who further formed local level women groups comprised of poor and marginalized women from the selected villages. The main aim of the program was to empower women through provision of education and livelihood programs.

Sadaf Gul is one such LRP selected from Basti Jinnah Colony to start a "livelihood support program" in Misali School. Sadaf Gul was selected as LRP based on her motivation, communication skills, openness to change in the community and commitment to the cause of SPO. Sadaf was assigned an important yet difficult task of identifying vulnerable women in the community and establishing a women literacy center, where women can get education and also discuss their day to day problems without any fear. Sadaf established such a literacy center where women would bring their problems and think of solution by brainstorming. During one session, a group member shared that one of her close family relatives was facing



serious problems due to land mafia threatening to illegally takeover their property. The issue required immediate attention as the family under threat had no male members and was particularly vulnerable in such a situation.

Literacy center members felt strongly about this issue so they decided to take the matter into their own hands and intervene to assist the victimized family. They visited the family under threat to assess their actual situation. Witnessing the vulnerability of the family resulting from poverty and absence of male members of the family, the women group decided to put pressure on the concerned authorities to deter the offenders. The literacy center women were known and respected among the community so they met the local influentials to gain their support and make them understand the injustice in this particular situation. This informal advocacy and collective efforts of the members resulted in preventing the offenders from taking over the property illegally. However, the offenders reinitiated their efforts to cease the land, after some time. They forcefully entered the premises and coerced the owners to vacate the house. Simultaneously, they forged illegal documents that stated the ownership of the house in their

name. Since their evidence was strong, the matter became highly controversial and was passed on to the local *panchayat* for resolution.

Panchayat is a traditional justice system which literally means "assembly of the five (village elders or influentials)". Traditionally, these assemblies settle disputes between individuals and villages. Panchayat falls strictly in the public domain and women are not traditionally part of it. Women members and groups capacitated under SPO's program decided to challenge this discriminatory regulation and attend the panchayat to show their support for the victimized family. The group also advised the affected family to take the matter to the formal court of law as their case would be strong since they possessed the original ownership documents. Moreover, since male members of the family were not available at the time, it was feared that the family may face discrimination at the hands of the male dominated panchayat. Thus, with the help of the women group, the case of illegal trespass was registered against the offenders at the police station. Thereafter, the family filed a civil suit and took a stay order on their land to ensure that legal position of their property could not be challenged. Through their collective efforts, the LRP and

women groups played an integral role in saving the property of the vulnerable family.

This case is a fine example of how women's collective efforts can empower them to fight for their rights. Prior to this campaign, women of the area had never publicly advocated for their rights. A major breakthrough was challenging the gender bias in the traditional panchayat, which enhanced women's status and decision making capacity. An attitudinal change was initiated through the campaign whereby women started seeing themselves as agents of social change. It is hoped that in the future, they will be integrated into the local legal system and power structure.



Successful Issue-Based Advocacy!

SPO has established successful Civil Society Networks in all its operational districts which have time and again proved pivotal in issue based advocacy. CSNs provide forums for the community to raise issues that pertain to larger benefits of the community. CSNs consist of well trained and skilled organizations that can run successful advocacy campaigns around issues that

are neglected by political representatives, government officials and influentials. Successful advocacy campaigns are based on multi-pronged strategies which attempt to mobilize and engage all stakeholders at many different levels. The success of advocacy campaign depends on the ownership of issue among the stakeholders and the commitment they have towards the cause. The

following case-study has all the elements of a successful advocacy campaign that has brought collective betterment for the entire population of Tehsil Ahmedpur Sharqia.

Tehsil Ahmedpur Sharqia is the largest tehsil of Punjab province, with a population of approximately 1 million people (0.2 million residing in urban areas). One of the lingering problems of the area has been the increasing traffic blockages on roads, which have become a menace for the local population. In order to address this issue, a sum of PKR 25 million was allocated by the State for construction of a one way road





(Dual Carriage Way) in 2006. For this purpose, the Highway Authority called for tenders and following a rigorous selection process contracted the project to the most apt candidate. However, the project initiation was constantly delayed due to lack of commitment of the local government to this problem. Thus, concerned community members decided to take the matter into their own hands. They sought the support of Civil Society Networks (CSNs) initiated by SPO, who immediately launched an advocacy campaign to accelerate the process.

During the initial phase of the campaign, a brochure titled 'Who is responsible for the impediments in construction of Dual Carriage Way' was designed and published, providing an in depth analysis of the problem at hand, including perspectives of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. 3000 copies of the brochure were disseminated locally to increase awareness regarding the significant issue. Furthermore, advertisements (1000 copies) stating the main tenets of the campaign were put up across Ahmadpur Sharqia for raising awareness amongst the local community. In response, the people showed their support by agreeing to launch a protest for the construction of the Dual Carriage Way.

After attaining communal backing, the CSNs directed their campaign towards State officials. Letters were sent to federal and provincial ministers as well as officials from the Pakistan Power and Water Development (PWD) department, calling for their support. The CSNs also met with important government officials to pressurize the local government to hasten the process of relieving the set budget for road construction. The DCO immediately attained relevant reports and assured the public that the matter would be taken seriously. On another front meetings were held with important political representatives which resulted in PWD being ordered to initiate the project. Thereafter, as a follow up activity, a discussion and lecture was held at Jinnah Hall, Ahmedpur Sharqia. The participants actively debated the issue; acknowledging the gravity of the problem and devising recommendations for accelerating construction work.

However, the support of the community and local government did not translate into implementation of the project. Thus, the CSN took a more aggressive approach and launched a protest rally, in order to pressurize the government to start work immediately. Hundreds of locals

participated in the rally, carrying placards and banners stating their demands. Motivational speeches were given by the protest leaders. The rally was successful in strengthening their demands at the local level.

Keeping in mind the important role of the media, CSNs also ensured their inclusion in the advocacy campaign. A Press Conference was held to discuss the problems faced in road construction, such as delays in project implementation and the need for formation of a relevant committee. The participants included journalists from all leading newspapers which ensured that the event received extensive coverage.

The advocacy campaign, spanning over a month, had successfully engaged all stakeholders and put immense pressure on the government officials to comply with the demands of the people. The political representatives were pushed by the constituents to take their demands seriously and use all in their power to get the project started. Finally, on July 11th, 2010, the project was formally initiated and construction work began. CSNs and NGOS were criticized by those who were responsible for the delay of the project, this however, has not hampered the process of road construction.



Advocacy Campaign to Eliminate Tribal Conflicts

SPO's advocacy campaigns are based on multi-pronged strategies which attempt to mobilize and engage all stakeholders at many different levels. The success of advocacy campaign depends on the ownership of issue among the stakeholders and the commitment they have towards the cause. The following case-study has all the elements of a successful advocacy campaign that are expected to bring collective betterment for the entire population of five districts in Sindh.

Virtual warfare between tribes and kinship groups, particularly in districts: Shikarpur, Ghotki, Jacobabad, Kashmore and Sukker of upper Sindh routinely claim dozens of lives. It is often argued that long-running blood feuds are an intrinsic aspect of the traditional rural tribal societies which undermines the importance of dealing with this issue that has ruined the law and order situation of these areas. Little has been done by the local

authorities, state or community, therefore, for dealing with the menace. In fact, the scale and persistence of violence and lawlessness in rural Sindh underwent a qualitative shift in the 1980s, and has escalated even further over the recent period. Easy availability of lethal weapons and vested interest of prominent political leaders in maintaining the status quo are some factors for the stagnancy in the situation.

The tribal clashes have claimed hundreds of innocent lives in which majority is of women. Such clashes have time and again paralyzed social interaction of people and day to day routine in simple things like school attendance by children. There is no leadership in the area to raise this issue and help mobilize people around the issue in order to address it. Hundreds of villages have been deserted and are devoid of life, owing to the displacement of people in search of safety.

SPO along with its allies i.e. CSNs and POs in districts Shikarpur and Ghotki, where there development interventions have been most affected, has launched an advocacy campaign for eliminating tribal conflict together. The campaign

aimed at addressing the issue by drawing serious attention, of the state, to take immediate action to stop bloodshed of innocent under the pretext of tribal conflict and restore peace in the area. In their efforts the allies mobilized the civil society, elected representatives, police department and people from all walks of life to play their contributory role in eliminating tribal conflict. The deplorable conditions of the affected areas was highlighted through media/journalists visits.

Some of the highlights of this advocacy campaign has been a Long March, motorcycle rallies and a SMS campaign. SPO in collaboration with Rural Development Organization Coordination Council RDOCC (CSN) Ghotki, organized a 85 Kilometer long march from Kamu-Shaheed (Sindh-Punjab border). The protestors held playcards, chanted slogan to condemn tribal conflict and demanded to stop bloodshed of the innocent people under the pretext of Tribal Terrorism. In addition, hundreds of people joined a motor cycle rally from Kamo Shaheed to all major cities of the district Ghotki as well. In addition



awareness raising was done through a SMS messaging activity by people who forwarded their concerns to influentials in the area such as the Chief Minister, Home Minister, Home Secretary, Chief Secretary, Parliamentarians from the district, local Sardars, Police Officers, IG Police, DIG Police, RPO and judicial authorities.

SPO Hyderabad in a joint venture with Political steering committees, CSN and POs of district Ghotki and Shikarpur distributed pamphlets and displayed banners against tribal conflict at public places. SPO also organized three roundtable dialogues in Sukkur, Shikarpur and Ghotki. The events were attended by journalists, advocates, traders, teachers, politicians and social activists. The core objectives of these meetings were to bring all stakeholders on board, identify the reasons behind the conflict issue and brainstorm for possible solutions. Subsequently SPO Hyderabad arranged media/journalists visits of victimized areas of district Ghotki, Shikarpur and Sukkur. They recorded individual and collective interviews with the victimized families so as to identify the key factors and what are hidden forces which are fuelling these clashes to meet their objectives. The delegations of SPO, CSN and

Political Steering Committee held delegation meetings with RPO, DIG and DPO of respective regions. The core objective of the meeting with the concerned departments was to draw serious attention towards burning issue of the area and take immediate action to stop bloodshed and restore peace in their areas.

The ongoing campaign has not completely rooted out the problem but it definitely managed to make dents in the rusted machinery of local government and local law enforcing and judicial systems. Some important advancement made through this campaign are as follows:

- Following the consistent advocacy campaign on tribal conflict, Sindh TV News (leading Sindhi electronic news channel) held provincial conference on Let's Stop Tribal Conflict together at Sukkur. The event was attended by the main stream political parties leaders, intellectuals, advocates, journalists, influential and civil society representatives.
- Besides, Sindh TV also observed a week long campaign to eliminate tribal conflicts in Sindh.

- There are 35 schools of Mir Pur, Gothki that have remained closed since 10 years due to the law and order situation in the area. Provincial Government has been intimated about them and they have taken up the issue with the Sindh Home Ministry.
- The Home Minister discussed the conflict issue in cabinet held meetings with District Police department and the local Sardars to work out a strategy to resolve the tribal clashes.

SPO along with its partners, in conflict affected districts, is pushing for the government to take legal action against the influentials who are behind these inhuman practices because the state must arrest and punish those who are responsible for such conflicts. Also, the state must ensure provision of education so that people in these conflict ridden communities can change the way tribal communities live.

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A Concrete Step in the Direction of Women Emancipation through Education

SPOs primary focus is strengthening and capacitating community based organizations to ensure sustainability of development interventions at the local level. SPO ensures selection of highly committed and driven organizations that have earned the trust and respect of the communities they serve. These CBOs are provided customized trainings

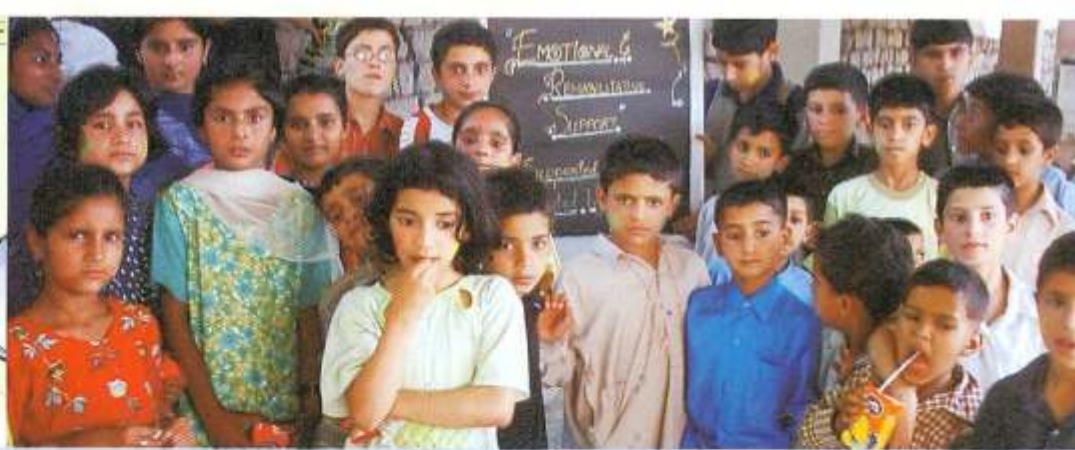
and technical knowledge on human rights and building advocacy campaigns around them. SPOs districts are rife with cases of successful advocacy campaigns by its partner organizations POs at the grassroots level.

Union council Ludan, district Vehari in Southern Punjab, has a total population of 40,000. This union council is notable for its political significance as it is home to a

number of influential Ministers and Parliamentarians. However, despite holding such positions of authority, local leaders have failed to improve social and economic development indicators for their area. A local NGO, United Welfare Association UWA, has been working in Ludan for the past decade in order to address the pertinent basic development problems in the area. Their impact, however, has been limited due to lack of technical expertise and capacity in rights based advocacy. Resultantly, developmental work in the region has been stagnant and the local population suffers from lack of basic rights, particularly for women.

SPO formed alliance with UWA, as a PO, in order to address its capacity





and expertise issues. Three members of the PO were selected for SPO's training on rights based advocacy. The training provided them insight on assessment and prioritization of human rights issues of the area and subsequently designing advocacy campaigns around them. During the research phase, the organization identified lack of an educational facility for women as a major problem in Ludan, since there was only one girl's high school in the Union Council. Moreover, the only Government Girls College was located 30 kilometers from Ludan rendering it inaccessible to the local girls. As a result, a large proportion of the school-going girls were unable to attain higher education.

In order to address this issue, the PO organized an awareness seminar in Ludan, with participants from the general public, education department, district level officials and the MNA from Ludan. During the course of the seminar a number of issues pertinent to girls' education in the area were highlighted by the speakers and participants. The stakeholders imposed pressure on the local government and elected representatives to establish a girls college in Ludan. Influential stakeholders such as the MNA and EDO Education assured the

participants that their demands would be taken seriously and forwarded to the provincial government for further action.

As follow up to the seminar and the promises made in it, the PO's executive council regularly met with different stakeholders like E.D.O. Education and D.O. Education to ensure that they adhered to their commitment. The executive council proposed that the recently constructed building for Boys College in the Union Council should be converted into a Girls College to facilitate girls' higher education at the local level. To strengthen their case, the United Welfare Association collaborated with Civil Society Networks in the area. The demand for a girls' college was officially made through a formal letter addressed to the education department. Simultaneously, to increase pressure on institutional stakeholders, a signature campaign was organized in which a large number of the community members participated. The signed banner was submitted to the education department as well as the MNA.

Owing to the continuous follow up and correspondence, Secretary Education conceded to the demands of the civil society and announced the establishment of a

new girls' college in Ludan. The advocacy campaign paid off, as the provincial government agreed to convert the recently constructed building for boys college into Government Girls Degree College Ludan. A striking feature of the campaign was that the local community was engaged throughout the process, which proved instrumental in ensuring this social change.

The girls college for women is currently fully functional with high enrollment of local girls, seeking education beyond matriculation. The community members are optimistic that education will equip the local girls with the necessary tools required to play a major role in their area's development. The combined efforts of SPO and United Welfare Association proved instrumental in improving the social situation of the area. They were able to address not only the state of the education sector in the area but also dealt with the gender based issues in education. Linkages were successfully built with the local community along with educating them on their basic human rights. The impact of this advocacy effort will hopefully be long term, as a rights based attitudinal change has been initiated, in the local community.

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Cultivating Democratic Values!

SPO has introduced the concept of District Steering Committees (DSC), as part of its “Democratic Governance Programme”, to engage political representatives of communities in understanding and owning human rights issues in their localities. The political

representatives from different political parties are brought together to instill in them a culture of mutual acceptance and tolerance, appreciation for difference of opinions, and unity to address issues of common concern. These representatives are introduced to concepts of

human rights, democracy, good governance, leadership and ethics of politics so that they can serve as political activists for their communities. These trainings aim to bring about change in the attitudes of political leaders and workers and make them receptive to the rights and real needs of their constituents.





SPO DG Khan has formed a District Steering Committee (DSC) in its district to address the basic human rights issues in the area and to integrate democratic values in the political party frameworks. The committee has addressed a number of developmental issues in its district through provision of trainings designed by SPO, on human rights, democracy and good governance. Following a consultative process to discuss the pertinent issues of the area, DSC D.G Khan, identified the Manica canal as an issue of foremost priority for their district.

Manica canal is situated in central new DG Khan City and had been a pressing concern for people for years. DSC in the district identified this issue as a priority issue which needed immediate attention. The water canal was constructed in 1910. However, in the 1960's it was converted into a sewage line. Since the canal passes through a large portion of the residential areas of the city, it was posing serious health hazards to the residents.

The DSC took a number of initiatives, as part of its advocacy efforts, to address the canal issue. It conducted dialogues with the concerned district officials; meetings with provincial political

leadership; and consultations with peer politicians. Furthermore the committee mobilized the public for peaceful demonstrations against the usage of water canal as a sewage line and propagated the issue through print and electronic media. DSC focused on campaigning with steadfast resolve and did not give in to the pressure of interest groups with vested interests. Eventually, their campaign based on mobilization of local population, dialogues with the district government officials and consultations with political leadership at the district and provincial levels bore fruit; the DSC successfully persuaded the relevant authorities for reinstating the original status of the water canal. Now, it no longer serves as a water sewage line but is instead being used as an irrigation canal. The district government, under its water canal restoration plan, has transformed the filth-capped banks on both sides of the canal into green belts.



Special Project Case studies

SPO added a component of special projects to its programme, since it cannot ignore the humanitarian crisis faced by Pakistan due to natural calamities and war on terror, in recent times. It has developed close ties with communities, local governments and civil society at grass roots level and realizes the expectations the community has from it. SPO has been successful in its relief efforts and humanitarian response owing to its familiarity with its operational districts and the strong partnership it has developed at the grass roots level.

Surviving with dignity

Recent floods in year 2010 caused massive destruction across the country, causing major setbacks to the lives of the local communities. District Muzafargarh remained one of the most severely affected areas in the province of Punjab.

Thousands of people lost their loved ones, houses, live stock, crops and other material belongings. The government, humanitarian agencies, and local philanthropists reached out to the flood affectees with relief support/assistance.

SPO under special projects responded to the hard hit areas with relief work and assistance. In Muzafargarh, SPO with the financial support of Concern Worldwide/USAID reached out to 3500 flood affected families

through provision of emergency shelter (tents). The tents were intended to protect affected families and ensure safety of the vulnerable section of the community especially, person with disability, old aged, orphans, and women.

Ghulam Hussain headed one such distressed family, badly affected by flooding, which had not yet received any help by either the government or other agencies involved in relief work. Through provision of emergency shelter, SPO catered to the shelter needs of Ghulam's family. The family was in bad shape as they lived under open sky without any shelter. Ghulam Hussain shared that in his view some people were getting preferential treatment in receiving aid and political leadership was influencing the relief efforts thus ignoring a few in need. He complimented SPO by sharing, that, they are carrying out relief efforts without any bias. He particularly appreciated SPO's service as it provided the tents at his door step.





Life and death in the midst of chaos - Meema Bibi's story

Meema Bibi presently lives in Zameerabad in D.I.Khan. She is 39 years old and has seven children living with her. Her son works on daily wages on construction sites. Life is hard for Meema Bibi and her family with 13 members and she struggles to make ends meet. There is no regular source of income for the family. Meema Bibi ended up in this situation as a result of the conflict between the armed forces and the Taliban in summer 2009. She is originally from Swat and was living there with her husband and children, till war broke out. Her husband could not take the stress of how the conflict was affecting their lives, and died. The family was displaced and lost a lot while on their journey of displacement from their hometown. Meema's mother-in-law died while they were travelling on foot in search of safety, Meema and her daughter in law lost their children owing to the hardships they bore while in displacement.

Meema Bibi is now living with 12 people in a cramped place, but she is glad that they have a roof over their heads. Their living conditions are extremely poor. She recollects

her journey with pain and anguish, but highlights the eventual moment of relief in their journey, when they were registered as IDPs and received food items. She however shows dissatisfaction with only the provision of food items because they still had no bedding or blankets to protect them from the cold. They were grateful for the NFI winter package from SPO that provided them with mattresses, quilts and warm shawls, and helped to ease their life a little.

Health and Hygiene practices by IDPs and host community

SPO identified the serious threat poor hygienic conditions posed to the health of people in IDP camps. To tackle this issue, the SPO team formed a committee of 12 persons, including six persons from within the IDPs and six from the host community in Awanabad, district Mardan. The committee was headed by a host community member. As mutually agreed, the committee collected Rs, 10

per month from every home and allocated a place for the disposal of garbage outside the village. Six laborers were hired on a daily basis to collect the garbage from houses and dispose it at the selected site.

The committee also contacted the *tehsil* administration in Nowshera and with the support of union council Nazim submitted an application for the proper management of the sewerage system in their locality.

In several places in Mardan, similar committees were successfully formed in response to sessions on health and hygiene that were conducted by SPO. The committees undertook measures to clean their surroundings and used indigenous technology for controlling the breeding of mosquitoes in stagnant water.

