

A Step towards Better Future

Arshad, a resident of village Raitra Pain (union council Chattar Plain) shares his experience as livestock worker.

Background

“I have been running the vet service point at Raitra Pain for past two years & I can rightly say this whole experience has significantly shaped my life”, said complacent Arshad

Arshad is in his mid 30s & has received primary level education from local village school. He started earning as a daily laborer besides working on his 4 kanal lands. He is a married man with three sons & a daughter.

Reflecting upon his early days Arshad said,” I started earning being a daily laborer. Most of the work used to be in & around my own village. I was overall quite tiresome requiring physical efforts but didn’t yield enough earning to support the family.” Alongside the labor, I worked as farmer too on my family land (approximately 4 kanals). We also had a cow but the dairy production was not sufficient .All the mentioned dairy & agriculture production was barely enough to meet daily domestic nutrition need & contributed very little to household incomes” continues Arshed.”I had just a little bit as savings for rainy days” added Arshed.



“In 2009 HAASHAR Association provided us an opportunity to build our skills as livestock extension worker, an opportunity which, I consider, brought an important turn in my life” says Arshad. “After getting the mentioned training I established a veterinary service point in my village & after borrowing money from friends & relatives bought a second hand motorcycle. I not only attend local sick cattle but provide service for 4-6 adjacent villages too”, says Arshed.

When asked about his observations about most prevailing livestock diseases of the area and services he provided Arshed said,” Most of the cattle suffer from Ghalghoto & foot & mouth disease in past. Esp. cattle suffering from the former had slight chances to

survive due to lack of awareness (to identify the disease symptoms & get medical service immediately) as well as lack of any such service facility at easy accessible location. Now I not only provide them medicines to treat their cattle but share useful relevant information too. Thus the cattle loss, due to just only this particular disease, has decreased significantly. Along with attending sick animal I also share with the owners how to prepare cattle fodder for improved productions. I feel glad when the owners report the increased production & improved health condition of their cattle” said proud Arshad.

“My customers not only include men but women from the local community too who whenever detect any illness symptoms in their animal immediately call me & seek my advice”, says Arshad.

Talking about attending LEW training & establishing vet service point’s economic & social benefits he is reaping, Arshad shared that having been equipped with better livestock management skills now he is able to manage his own cattle effectively. Just changing the quality & type of fodder had a significant effect on milk production. Besides he is now better

able to safeguard his cattle (a cow, a buffalo & a goat now) against many diseases. “My average monthly income from vet service point is approximately 4000 -5000 Rs now which has improved my economic situation. My social status has also upgraded as villagers whom I attend pay regard to me & I am quite well known person of the area now”, Arshad told with smile on his face.



From Ignorance to Enlightenment

A tiger mother's effort to get her daughter educated

As it's rightly said that knowing self is the first step towards change and dialogue is an effective tool to trigger thinking and self awareness process ultimately leading to change process. It was realized during a gender session at Nakholi (UC Ichrian) when women who appeared to be reserved and indifferent slowly started opening up and sharing their life stories, their hardships due to many socioeconomic and cultural realities and how they struggled past them on sheer will and persistence.

After attending gender session and discussion gender equality; how women themselves can act as a catalyst to change the whole gray picture, Gulab Un Nisa shared her faced ordeals caused by social taboos and biased perceptions & her persistence to overcome the odds is exemplary.

Gulab un Nissa in her 30s, mother of three daughters and two sons, is resident of village Nakholi (Union Council Chattar, District Mansehra). Her husband Bashir previously

served in police department and after retirement now working in Islamabad in private sector. Like many other women who were deprived of the right to education (due to absence of education facility nearby) Gulab un Nissa is down right focused on getting her children esp. daughters educated as according to her” I know education is key to independence and better life”. But after having said that her facial expressions gave way to a whole lot struggle she is going through to realize those dreams. “There is only one school in the village Nakholi for girls and its providing education only up to 5th grade after which most of girls stay home and help out in daily household chores. When my eldest daughter Ayesha passed 5th grade I had to make decision about her future; make her sit at home and marry her off when she reaches teenage or take a bold step and get her admitted in a school where there was co-education. No other girl could carry her education due to this restraint as people around the area had very negative opinion about girls studying in co-education. “I faced strong resistance at domestic level



by my in-laws esp. my mother-in-law and even my own mother didn't stand by me "says sad but determined Gulab un Nissa." My husband didn't readily agree to this saying we have to face social pressures and our daughter may have to face pointing fingers and even harassment. But I was determined to the point of even disobeying him if he didn't allow Ayesha to get education to which he finally acceded". But the struggle didn't stop here says Gulab un Nissa. "I was rebuked and slandered at the hands of local community esp. women from neighborhood who called me names and kept passing pungent remarks about my family on the account that Ayesha is getting education in co education system. My 13 years old son is also facing same treatment at the hands of neighborhood boys who keep testing his patience through passing nasty remarks about Ayesha and me". Through this rare platform of women VCC (village coordination committee) initiated and now facilitated by HAASHAR has provided me an outlet to share my ordeals and dreams. It will also help giving those women courage to come forward and get their daughters enrolled who had been kept mum by social pressures". When asked about what her future plans for Ayesha Gulab un Nissa smiled and said," My husband says that we will get Ayesha admitted in a reputable college in Islamabad after her matriculation from this local school", continues Gulab un Nissa. " Ayesha wants to join police department after completing her education as she wants to serve her community through working on protection issues being faced by local women and make this dream of a tolerant and healthy society come true" says an illiterate but an enlightened mother.