



QUETTA: A social upliftment scheme once launched in *Balochistan* came to the aid of over 280 local families in pursuit of employment opportunities and income support. Those who benefited from this programme have now decided to carry the torch forward and help others in need.

The programme, which was instituted by Social Development Initiatives, a non-government and non-profit social organisation, provided people with financial support ranging between Rs60,000 to Rs 100,000 for starting small businesses, local level agricultural development and livestock rearing.

Owing to this, beneficiaries of the programme experienced a bump of Rs15,000 to Rs20,000 in their income. Now, the beneficiaries have joined hands with the organisation to aid and uplift others stuck in the same financial constraints that they once were.

“We have helped over 2,500 families across the country in becoming self-sufficient and breaking away from the poverty cycle,” said organisation trustee Asim Siddiqui, who plans to further expand the scope of his programme in the coming years.

Per programme head Shehryar Nadeem Khan, the upliftment scheme was first initiated in 2016 with limited resources, and largely catered to the people in Lasbela district of Balochistan, where unemployment had been an epidemic. “We have made great progress since, but our vision is still the same— to make the people self-sufficient via technical training and monetary support,” he told.

Under this programme, people are provided employment in three domains. The first plan is agricultural development. Under this scheme, small farmers who have three acres or more of land are provided financial assistance of Rs80,000 to Rs100,000 per crop. Although the financial assistance here is not in the form of cash, the small farmers are trained to sell and use modern fertiliser and farming methods. Owing to this, so far, over 72 farming families have experienced a 150 per cent increase in their crop yield, resulting in an additional income of Rs250,000 to 300,000.

Under the second scheme of this project, some 100 families were provided with cattle worth Rs70,000 to breed, which per the organisation’s reports amounted to a 100 per cent increase in the families’ income.

Similarly, under the third scheme, over 20 families were aided in the process of starting small businesses worth investments of Rs50,000 to Rs80,000. These included puncture shops, tailor outlets, grocery stores, tea houses and other businesses like rickshaw driving.

Muhammad Aslam, who received a rickshaw under the self-sufficiency program, said that he was the imam of a mosque in the Othal area. “I used to get a salary of Rs10,000 from the mosque, which was barely enough to meet my family’s expenses. With the rickshaw I have been provided with, I can work part-time as a transporter and earn an extra Rs10,000 to Rs15,000 to supplement my income” he added.

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used to work at a hotel. Now I stitch women's clothes and embroider Baroque patterns on them, which earns me about 15 to 18 thousand rupees a month.

Another beneficiary of the programme, Muhammad Haroon, a farmer who received training in modern farming techniques, said that he had been running into severe debts. "But then, I was provided with farming training, along with seeds, fertiliser and other resources with a fund of Rs80,000. Due to this, I have been able to turn my losses into profits and feed my family," he said.

According to Program Head Shehryar Nadeem Khan and Lasbela Employment Program Manager Babar Junaid, there used to be a severe shortage of water in Balochistan.

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