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## A Progressive Mashar<sup>1</sup>

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*“I request the LPH “Please do not stop here... We have just started. Stay with us until we sustain ourselves through Taraqiati Jirgas”. We live surrounded by fear and uncertainty. Small issues can spark violent clashes between different ethnic groups in our area. I just want peace so that we live our lives fully, do our businesses and our children do not miss school.”*

**Doya Khan, President Taraqiati Jirga, Raghasar, Kot Kaley, FR DI Khan**

Our Taraqiati Jirga (TJ) has never challenged the Traditional Jirga and neither has our respect for them waned. While they assemble only for disputes, we organize ourselves around people's need and development of our village. I belong to the Sherani tribe and am currently serving as the President of 10 TJs formed in Raghasaar Valley. In Pashto language I call it 'Komi Taroon' (Gathering the nation

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<sup>1</sup> A village elder whose knowledge and experience make his opinions and advice worthy enough and be respected by people

on one platform). I am a retired Subaidar Major from the military and I long for discipline and unity. In early 2015 we formed a TJ with the facilitation of the LPH and partner organization SPO (Strengthening Participatory Organization). They had put in extra efforts to make us believe that we need a platform where we can collectively discuss and decide all the developmental aspects of the village, and that we should not be influenced by anyone, instead be united. The TJ was not formed in one day. The team interacted with us for a number of times till we started to believe that it made sense.

How does a TJ help? Let me give you an example: I was once invited to a nearby village Jatte Ghobaz where there was a dispute on site selection for a drinking water scheme. About 60 families that were facing difficulties and women used to fetch water from 2.5 km away. The feasible site was owned by a farmer named Jamal Din. His land is out of the village on the road side. The water source was on his property. He usually let the women fetch water from this source but would not accept the proposal for the scheme. I along with other Mashars visited his house and discussed this matter, but he would not listen.

The TJ and the village people of Jatte Ghobaz decided for 'Nanawatey<sup>2</sup>. So we slaughtered a sheep in front of his house and requested him to let the water pipes be laid. This was accepted by Jamal Din and the drinking water scheme was laid. After forming the TJ, much to our own surprise we initiated

interventions like constructing irrigation channels, installing drinking water schemes, constructing protection walls, establishing NFE School for little girls and boys, conducting health and hygiene trainings, provided livestock fattening trainings to farmers. We were introducing diversity in agriculture (tomato, garlic, wheat, maize and millet). These were the immediate interventions direly needed by the community. I was aware of the fact of low enrollment of girls in the NFE School but did not lose hope. I went door to door to motivate the parents to send their daughters to school. All my efforts paid off when I see little girls and boys attending school. I want to see the youth as educated and ahead in every positive aspect.



The work with youth must be part of the movement of change. When I look at my own offspring, I strongly want the youth to come ahead and prove themselves as the bright future of our village. They lack employment and educational prospects, I do not want them to slip away from responsibilities either. There is an urgent need for skills development and education opportunities in the area. Knowing the importance of education, I wanted to enable youth to become empowered enough to find employment, otherwise they would end up gambling, become drug addicts or get involved in other crimes.

I have managed to create an organizational structure with the support of the LPH and SPO in which the youth have been engaged. We have channelized their energies positively. With the support of youth in TJ, we have a clear and transparent account maintenance system. Our profile is maintained with the Political Agent, whom we periodically visit in search of developmental activities. The LPH and SPO were invited by the tribe to facilitate women on health and hygiene issues. This was due to our

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<sup>2</sup> Nanawatay derives from the verb to go in and is used when the vanquished party is prepared to go in to the house or Hujra of the visitors and beg forgiveness. There is no nanawatay when the dispute involves injury to women.

TJ's continuous motivation. All were trained in their houses and the impact was so clear that the women also demanded latrines in their homes. Two families even managed to construct latrines for themselves. My children are now washing hands before meals and after using latrines. On demand of women, the TJ and the LPH agreed on a water scheme to ensure access to water at their doorstep. But more is needed to develop our women. Tribal values are strict since NGOs still cannot have access to work with women even with female staff. We need to go slow. For now, instead of working with women, I would rather say at least work for women through different strategies.

We live surrounded by fear and uncertainty. Small issues can spark violent clashes between different ethnic groups in our area. I just want peace so that we live our lives fully, do our businesses and our children do not miss school. As TJs are emerging to help people in distress through different developmental initiatives, I request "Please do not stop here...We have just started". We need LPH to continue its support to change our minds. LPH respects our norms and tradition that is why we want them to be with us until we sustain ourselves through TJ.