



“Khairun nas man yanfa`un nas”, (The Best Amongst Mankind is One Who Benefits Humanity)

“I was very nervous when the people of my village elected me as the president of the community organization. It was a moment of delight as the embers had expressed their trust in me, but at the same time I was afraid of not being able to meet up to their expectations. Today, when I peep into my past, I see a common man sitting in his small shop in the corner of the village Garamutt, a powerless man having no say and needs the support of his uncle to survive against the outrages of the powerful men in the village. I still remember when people threatened to kill me as I was working for an NGO. They thought an NGO is a foreign entity and spoils our values. I remained persistent. Now I am popular enough to be able to arrange meetings with higher officials on short notice. This activism has given me my identity.”

Kalu Khan, an activist from Garamutt village, Chodwan valley, District DI Khan

My forefathers belonged to this village where I live. I have a great affiliation with my land as I grew up in these streets playing traditional games: guli danda, marbles, turning the wheel. Not having a high school, my father sent me to one further off. I wanted to go to the city for further studies as I wished to have a post graduate degree. But my father died in 1993 and I had to return. The responsibilities of family came onto my shoulders. My father had left a shop as his legacy so I became a shopkeeper.

Even though the income was not that high but at least we survived. My father had taken a loan of about PKR 80,000/- when he was alive and as he died the people started asking for their money. Realising that with the little income from the shop I'll never be able to pay back the loan, in 1995 I decided to go to Karachi. I used to work as labourer and managed to send back money on a monthly basis to repay the loan. Once loan was paid off, I returned to my village and started again. I have two sons and three daughters. My two sons are living with my sister in the city as they were admitted into a public school, and I have married off my eldest daughter.

In 2009, the LP came to our village to implement a project, which they explained. I got selected as a facilitator. It was really hard to convince people to form a community organization. I faced many hardships: people stood against me but I did not retrieve back. One of my uncles at that time supported

me in my cause and stood by me. Gradually people became motivated and in the beginning few like-minded people agreed to be a part of community based organization and then it grew. I was elected by the community members as the president of the organization. It was a moment of delight as the members had expressed their trust in me but at the same time it made me fearful and nervous as meeting up to the expectations of the people was not easy. It was a test run for all of us who had taken a chance against all odds though some people were against us. But then this confusion was also removed as the project trained us on how an organisation works and what are the roles and responsibilities of executive body members (president, secretary and finance secretary).



As I learnt and gained experience as an activist I also started developing linkages with people in different departments. And from this platform I managed to resolve many issues of the village. One such example is of NADRA; I facilitated National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA's) mobile team to visit our village and make the Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) of women in the village. Now the team comes twice a year for the same. Similarly, I also contacted the Benazir



Income Support Programme of the government¹ and helped the poor women get registered with the programme for financial assistance.

Before the LPH I was living for my own self, every deed of mine was based on individual benefits. I kept my family and myself as a first priority. But as I became the president of community organization my thinking transformed towards collectivism. I always convinced the community organization that while distributing any packages, keep the women and vulnerable on the preference as beneficiaries. One of

¹ This programme gives monthly stipend to destitute women to meet their basic needs. Such women need to apply to become beneficiaries

such packages offered by the LP was distribution of hens and goats; in that case we nominated 20 poor, deserving women for hens and 5 for goats and they started with this input. Many of them are still raising goats and poultry. I can recall one woman, a widow who had received hens as a startup for the business. She still has chickens and sells the eggs and chickens. Three women from this village also received tailoring machines. I am also a farmer and grow crops as a tenant; I cultivate crops like wheat, chick pea, barley and maize on about twenty-five acres of another person's land. After the flood in 2010, the LPH has also helped us restore our agricultural land and provided chickpea seed to the farmers. Most importantly, the LPH linked us with the officials of the Agriculture Department. They helped us learn new techniques of farming such as the top three inches of soil are very important and fertile. If it gets destroyed, it takes almost thirty years to restore the fertility of soil.



We practiced as per their advice and the crop yield started to get higher.

Water scarcity is another critical issue of this village. We and our animals used to drink water from the same water puddle before the LPH helped us resolve the issue. In 2015-16, they assisted us in building water storage tanks and tube wells. Though the current crises in power supply makes it difficult to run the tube well so we have to arrange for converting it into solar system if possible. 3 hand pumps were also provided by another NGO

In the village, there is a government school for boys, but the government girls' primary school is not functional for the last 30 years. I mobilised all the people in the village, wrote an application to reopen



the school and all the people endorsed it. I have submitted this application in the office of provincial ombudsman and am hopeful it will be functional soon. For the time being, with the LPH we started primary school 2in which 30 girls are enrolled. This school has now been handed over to the government. The LPH has also provided health and hygiene trainings to the women and children.

I have constructed a new shop for fixing punctures, air pumps and mobil oils. When I look into my past I see a shopkeeper! A common man sitting in his small

shop in the corner of the village Garramutt, a powerless man having no say who needed the support

² NFE, Non formal Education

of his uncle to survive against the outrages of the powerful men in the village. I still remember when people threatened to kill me as I was working for an NGO since an NGO was perceived as a foreign entity changing our values. I used to run to my uncle for refuge and now in my current life I am popular among the people and they acknowledge my good deeds and efforts that I did for the village. I have contacts with government departments and I can arrange meetings with the officials on short notice. I access members of the Provincial Assembly (MPA). This activism gave me my identity, in union council and district wherever you take my name, they recognise me. It is the saying of our prophet that "Khairun nas man yanfa`un nas" (The Best Amongst Mankind is One Who Benefits Humanity) and this is my motto as well. I know that there is always one person who plants the tree but as it grows many eat its fruit and sit under its shadow. I want to be the person who plants the tree.