

## Headline: A Challenging Choice for Unskilled Rural Workers

### Nadir Ali Shah

Diyaloo is 18 years old, married, and a labourer. He lives in Mao Patel village, Union Council Masoo Bozdar, Tando Allahyar with his family. He is the guardian, caretaker and lone bread earner for his family, including his wife, a daughter, a son and an elderly mother. I met him in November, 2016 during the field work for an ethnographic study. He works on daily wages, earning rupees 200, on construction sites near his village, and also in the fields as a farmer. However, he finds it very hard to make both ends to meet due to his meager source of income. His family is suffering due to extreme level of poverty.

To get rid of poverty, Diyaloo decided to move away from his village. In August 2016 he reached the coastal mega metropolis of Karachi, to explore the city and find out if he can earn enough to support his family. As Diyaloo was not a skilled labourer, he was able to get a job with the help of one his relatives that paid 400 rupees a day.

“The construction site was away from my residence and I traveled every day by public transport. Bus fare was Rs. 50 for both sides, and one meal costed up to 100 rupees. My daily expense was almost 250 rupees. There wasn’t much i could save, despite of the hard labour. I was able to earn 200 rupees a day working in my village”, said Diyaloo, while sharing his experience. “With the meager savings i managed, it was impossible to move my family to Karachi. Living away from my family was not easy. So, i decided to return to my village”, he added.

After staying, and working, in Karachi for three day, Diyaloo returned to his village. He announced that he will not be going outside the village for work. Most of the people in the village do not think of working as labourer outside the village because they cannot afford living away from their houses. If they do not have any work in the village, then they prefer to stay free, instead of moving elsewhere in search of livelihood. In the words of Diyaloo’s mother, Chanda Bai, “Diyaloo talked to us on phone from Karachi. We asked him to come back, because his children were missing him too much. He also expressed the same feelings. Next day, Diyaloo appeared in the house and promised never to go away again.”

Residents of Mao Patel village describe homesickness an important reason for not preferring to work in big cities like Karachi and Hyderabad. This unwillingness to relocate further diminishes their chances of finding alternate which is another main cause of their poverty.

Nowadays, Diyaloo is working as labourer and farmer in his village to earn his bread and butter. He considers earning less in his village better than earning slightly more in Karachi or Hyderabad.

“I would not suggest to anyone to migrate to Karachi. The difference in income will be very limited, as the costs will be higher. Those who are skilled labourers can try to find work, and earn more”, he says.

Dwellers of Mao Patel village think that village life is easy for them as compared to urban life. As they say and I quote, “We are not educated and also lack skills. We cannot earn a lot by migrating to the big cities. If we are provided with skills training at community level then we can think of migrating to Karachi or Hyderabad to find work. Otherwise, it is too difficult for us to relocate.”

Time might have come for an opportunity that would provide Diyaloo and the likes with technical and vocational training skills under the European Union funded Sind Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme.

Started in 2015, the SUCCESS Programme aims to train 108,000 members of the rural communities in the eight programme districts of the Sindh province. Diyaloo’s village is part of the SUCCESS Programme area. Once equipped with technical and vocational skills, migration might offer better prospects for these unskilled laborers who are struggling with poverty and lack of choices.

Note: Pseudonym have been used to protect the privacy

*Nadir is a Field Researcher at RSPN-SUCCESS.*