



Sindh Union Council and Community Economic
Strengthening Support Programme
SUCCESS is funded by the European Union



LAHOOTI MELO 2019-IN COLLABORATION WITH SUCCESS



Jamshoro, Pakistan
February 9-10, 2019



www.rspn.org

www.success.org.pk

www.facebook.com/successprogramme

Twitter: [@SUCCESSinSindh](https://twitter.com/SUCCESSinSindh)

Instagram: [/successinsindh](https://www.instagram.com/successinsindh)

Lead Authors:

Khatija Ahmed, Young Development Professional, SUCCESS, RSPN

Mekail UI-Mulk, Young Development Professional, SUCCESS, RSPN

Shabnam, Young Development Professional, SUCCESS, RSPN

Editor:

Ghamae Jamal, Knowledge Management Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN

Contributor:

Momina Khawar, Communications Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN

Reviewed by:

Fazal Ali Saadi, Programme Manager SUCCESS, RSPN

Designer:

Ghamae Jamal, Knowledge Management Officer, SUCCESS, RSPN

All pictures used in this publication are the property of SUCCESS and its partners.

© 2018 Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN). All rights reserved. Licensed to the European Union under conditions



"This Publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and do not necessarily taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

More information about European Union is available on:

Web: <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan/>

Twitter: @EUPakistan

Facebook: [European-Union-in-Pakistan/269745043207452](https://www.facebook.com/European-Union-in-Pakistan/269745043207452)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview 4

Background of the event 5

SUCCESS at Lahooti Melo 6

The Event 8

Lahooti Melo in the media 10

Annexure: Agenda for the Lahooti Melo 14

OVERVIEW

Recently, in Pakistan, there has been an upsurge of cultural and social events that celebrate our heritage and community. Such recreational activities create an environment of communal unity as well generate awareness, that act as catalysts towards development.

The SUCCESS programme has a strong component to create awareness of the work undertaken by rural women in Sindh. This is usually carried out through our communication campaign, by documenting and posting the work done by the women and their institutions and case studies of women beneficiaries of SUCCESS in electronic, social and print media. However, participating in an already established event or festival, can create far greater media coverage and target different stakeholders. Keeping the potential of festivals in mind, the SUCCESS programme collaborated with the Lahooti Melo 2019, which took place on the 9th and 10th of February, at Sindh University, Jamshoro. The main theme this year was ‘an ode to a liberated woman’, which follows the momentum gaining the #MeToo movement, aimed against sexual harassment, violence against women and women empowerment. As a female empowerment programme, this year’s theme attracted the SUCCESS programme to the festival, as the team felt the objectives were similarly aligned.

Committed to women empowerment and dedicated to the #MeToo movement, the festival offered many talks and panel discussions all focused on women and prevalent issues that surround them. Prominent guests spoke at the Lahooti Melo 2019, including renowned authors/activists Amar Sindhu, Fouzia Saeed, Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Pakistani singer/social worker Shehzad Roy, author Mohammad Hanif among others. The festival was marked with a number of power talks in between sessions of music, poetry and story-telling.



The two-day event showcased various food and artefact stalls which included the Sindh Rural Support Organisation’s (SRSO) *Sartyoon Sang* as well. *Sartyoon Sang* literally means “together with friends” and aims to provide market linkages to artisans especially rural women. Formed in 2011 as part of the SRSO Crafts Enterprise, it aims to evolve tradition and workmanship while creating sustainable income for rural female artisans. *Sartyoong Sang* has a reach of more than 10,000 female artisans that includes weavers, potters, embroidery workers among others. Unsurprisingly with their cultural significance, high quality and ethical objectives, they were popular at the festival. SUCCESS programme’s publications including the Echoes series, LSO initiatives and newsletters were placed at the stall, that were distributed to young students, media personalities, social media influencers and academia.

Along with the stall, the SUCCESS programme also held a power talk designed in the shape of a TED Talk on the second day of the festival, 10 February 2019. The talk titled “Empowering Rural Women Across Sindh” was given by one of SUCCESS programme’s beneficiary, Irum Wahid, the president of her LSO in Union Council Chuhar Jamali, District Sujawal. She shared her experience and story, from fighting the stigma around the role of women in a community to fearlessly demanding development initiatives from government representatives to inspire the youth in the audience. She explained the importance of the SUCCESS programme and the impact it had on the women in her region. The talk concluded with an animated video of the components and objectives of the EU funded SUCCESS programme.

BACKGROUND OF THE EVENT

Lahooti Melo is self-described as the “festival to talk about music, dance, poetry and arts”. It was initially started as a meeting ground for musicians by Saif Samejo from ‘The Sketches’ fame, where musicians could interact and learn from one another, especially newcomers to the industry. Since then it has included panel discussions of important societal issues within Pakistan, with renowned voices from various backgrounds, fields and professions. This includes established civil servants, government workers, academia and prominent members of the entertainment industry. By sponsoring the event, the SUCCESS programme wanted to create awareness of the lives of rural women in Sindh to these stakeholders.



Lahooti Melo 2019 broke from the trends of hosting such music festivals in established cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad by hosting this year’s festival in Jamshoro. Even the previous Lahooti Melo festivals had taken place in Hyderabad. This was an important message to promote as sexual violence and harassment aren’t restricted to the urban landscape, instead occur throughout the country. Speakers at the event such as SUCCESS beneficiary brought an understanding of the situation in rural Sindh, and the steps being taken to empower women.

Talks such as these have only grown in strength, and have culminated in what is now called the #MeToo movement in late 2017. This has added to the interest in understanding the social challenges women in Pakistan face and the desire to change a mind-set that has been deeply embedded in many of Pakistan’s people for far too long. The programme agenda is attached in the Annexure at the end of the report.

SUCCESS AT LAHOOTI MELO



Across the two days, there were power talks, designed in the form of TED Talks for the audience. TED Talks are designed to spread ideas, usually with short powerful speeches (18 minutes or less). For their part in Lahooti Melo, the SUCCESS team from RSPN arranged a power talk on the second day, 10 February 2019. The talk titled “Empowering Rural Women Across Sindh” was given by with one of the SUCCESS programme’s beneficiary, Irum Wahid, who shared her experience and story to inspire the young students and stakeholders at the event. Irum Wahid is the president of her LSO in Union Council Chuhar Jamali, District Sujawal.

Under her leadership, almost 2,000 women from her area are impacted and urged to change the fate of their families on a daily basis. Irum herself comes from a conservative household in rural Sujawal but her resolve to be vocal for the rights women has always been paramount. From fighting the stigma around the role of women in a community to fearlessly demanding development initiatives from government representatives - Irum is an inspiration for not just the women in her area but for everyone in the country.

With an audience of over 100 people, she narrated her personal story and the impact of the programme on her life. Irum is married with five children, with a nine-year old paralysed son. She managed to complete her graduate degree at a very difficult time. The priority she gave education can be determined as she gave her inter exams on the second day of her marriage. Leaving the house right after her marriage was considered controversial and she was exposed to comments and ridicule from her community. However, she ignored the scorn to successfully complete her studies after marriage.

Today, Irum is an independent and confident woman who can speak in front of large crowds without any hesitation. However, this was no small feat and she struggled to act on her objectives.

She is from an area where five years ago women were not allowed to meet other women within or outside their villages. They did not hold any form of authority and were not allowed to talk or participate in domestic matters. When Irum got married she had already done her matriculation. Therefore, in the neighbourhood, especially her in-laws kept their daughters away from her in case she might instil in them a yearning for education.

Describing an incident that impacted her personally, she narrated a story of a girl in her village who was mentally challenged. However, the girl was falsely accused as a *karri* (dishonourable), a term that can lead to an extrajudicial death sentence in these villages. Irum was traumatised hearing this verdict about a girl who did not have any control over her life. She took it upon herself to save this innocent young girl. With tears welled up in her eyes, she narrated how she found the girl in a deplorable condition trapped in her family's home as they prepared to poison her to death.

Trying to free the girl, Irum was threatened by the victim's family with death if she interfered. However, Irum did not lose hope and requested the *Maulvi Sahib* for help. The *Maulvi Sahib* managed to convince the victim's family to allow Irum to take her to the hospital with the condition that the case would not be brought to the police. Doctors were able to save the girl's life despite her critical condition. Instead of feeling proud of their daughter-in-law's involvement, her in-laws were enraged. It took the *Maulvi Sahib* to calm her in-laws and help them understand the situation.

The victim's family did not appreciate Irum's interference either and harshly berated her. Irum listened patiently and suggested that they try to investigate the situation in greater depth. Once that was done, nothing like *karri* appeared to exist, and they accepted the girl back in the family. Irum's strength of character and her understanding of the local context helped save an innocent's life. Today that girl is happily married and has two children. Irum's resilience is a sense of pride for her family and she has developed a positive reputation within the village. In this way, Irum developed her agency to stand up against injustice and persuade others to do the right thing. She exclaimed, "you may face many challenges in your life but never give up and don't miss the opportunity to help others".

Talking about the programme and the impact it had on her life, Irum related the time when NRSP first came to her village. In February 2012, SUCCESS, a project of the European Union started to recruit people in communal organisations. "I then came to know about the SUCCESS project and that it's only for women, which made me very happy because in Community Organisations (COs) earlier to this, there were mostly just men and women's voices were suppressed. This was the first programme in our region that was only for women. At first the men of my village were not willing to allow us to go outside for meetings and trainings". Clearly, according to Irum there were apprehensions from the local men in the region. However, SUCCESS representatives promised them that there would be appropriate environment for women which satisfied them.

She went on to list all the beneficial components of the SUCCESS programme which included the Community Investment Fund, Income Generating Grant, Technical and Vocational Skills Training, and Micro Health Insurance. She also explained the Joint Development Committees, that allowed rural women to meet government representatives and share their issues and problems. Irum claimed that her union council managed to create 148 Community Organisations, 11 Village Organisations and one Local Support Organisation.

According to Irum, her involvement in the programme enabled her to volunteer with the police during the last elections. Working with female police officers made her realise how women could achieve as much as men even in predominantly male-dominated fields. When wearing the police

cap, she exclaimed, “I felt proud and powerful. I wondered how powerful these women felt when wearing the whole uniform”.

Irum has come a long way to establish herself as a role model for her village, setting herself as an example to their daughters. She acknowledged that, “it has only been possible because of the SUCCESS programme and the COs. If they had not come to my village, I might not have been able to come out of my home, therefore, I am thankful to SUCCESS for providing me with a life changing opportunity”.



The talk concluded with an animated video explaining the SUCCESS programme to the audience for another five minutes. The video explained the components and objectives of the EU funded SUCCESS programme.

THE EVENT

The event was marked with musical performances from Project Zil, The Sketches, Sareesh & Lahoot, Veru Shan, Fahad Ahmed, Seem se Jafar, Taj Mastani and Ali Tariq. Music is a means of gathering audiences and instilling ideas, and in this manner, Lahooti Melo manages to become far more than just a music festival. Despite not taking place in a city such as Karachi or Hyderabad, it was noted by various media outlets such as The Dawn Newspaper, that students from all over Sindh had arrived to take part in the weekend’s festivities.

Prominent guests attended Lahooti Melo 2019, including renowned authors/activists Amar Sindhu and Fouzia Saeed, whilst others from the music industry such as Hamza Akram, Rachel Viccaji and Mughal-e-funk are also known to have attended.

The first day’s events started at 11:00 am with ‘Happy Hour Yoga’ by Yogi Kamal Kumar, where he described the importance of maintaining a balance between the mind, body and soul, before leading the crowd in a session of yoga. This was followed by Rubina Abro who sang ‘Azad Aurat

Jo Tarano', which translates to an anthem of an independent woman. The inaugural session that followed had a number of speakers. The Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah noted how important and memorable the anthem sung by Rubina Abro had been.

Alongside the various attractions, this festival was used as a platform for social activism and included a number of power talks in between sessions of music, poetry and story-telling. The first of these talks was delivered by Dr. Fouzia Saeed, titled '#herstory'.

Committed to women and dedicated to the #MeToo movement, the festival offered many talks all focused on women and prevalent issues that surround them. While this year's concept was based on a specific incident close to founder Samejo's heart, it came to life through the building up of many women going through similar incidents of harassment, discrimination, forced marriages and abuse. Through the wide range of sessions the connection between SUCCESS and the focus of the Lahooti Melo became even clearer. The festival was wholly embracing inclusivity and bringing all the provinces together for one goal, liberating women, which echoes RSP's goal to liberate and alleviate women from poverty.



During the 'Redefining Consent' talk, which laid out the foundation for the rest of the festival, author Mohammed Hanif focused on the important issue of the idea of male dominance in all spheres of life, even, rather ironically, when it came to discussing women's topics. "The problem with the men in our society is very basic: if you've given them a platform, they will talk, even if they don't know a thing about the topic."

Giving an interview with The News, the founder of the festival, Saif Samejo reiterated, "The theme was beyond empowered women and #MeToo because when we think of an empowered woman,

we tend to think of a financially empowered woman. We were not talking about the financially liberated woman. A woman should decide how she is liberated or empowered. We, the men in society, cannot and should not make that decision for her”.

RSPs who are starkly aware of this issue help emancipate women from this patriarchal constraint by allowing them to take charge of the issues they face and giving them the power and resources to try to remove themselves out of the shackles of poverty without having to rely on the men in their lives. Ameena Saiyid rightly commented on financially emancipating women as well, as she stated, ‘financial independence is key to liberate women completely.’

RSPs seek to do this through social mobilisation and giving both technical and financial support to women across rural Pakistan, allowing them to realise their own potential and utilise it to free themselves from the cycle of poverty.

LAHOOTI MELO IN THE MEDIA

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL: THE NEWS ON SUNDAY



The revelry of Lahooti Melo 4

Maheen Sabeeh February 17, 2019 · Leave a comment

Instep spends two days in Jamshoro to uncover the magic of Lahooti Melo. As it turns out, it is very much real.



<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/revelry-lahooti-melo-4/#.XHN29ugzY2y>

Lahooti Melo kicks off with an ode to the liberated woman



HYDERABAD: The two-day colourful kaleidoscope of Lahooti Melo 2019 kicked off on Saturday at the Hyder Bux Jatoi pavilion ground in the University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/430433-lahooti-melo-kicks-off-with-an-ode-to-the-liberated-woman>

Two-day Lahooti Melo kicks off in Jamshoro

By Our Correspondent Published: February 10, 2019

70
SHARES



SHARE



TWEET



EMAIL



<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1907329/1-two-day-lahooti-melo-kicks-off-jamshoro/>

Dawn News

Lahooti Melo 2019 will be an ode to the liberated woman

UPDATED FEB 09, 2019 02:21PM



IMAGES STAFF
DESK REPORT

The organisers of the music, poetry, art and dance festival give us all the deets about what to expect.



<https://images.dawn.com/news/1181828>

News One



LAHOOTI MELO AN ODE TO LIBERATED WOMEN, ENTHRALLS, ENCHANTS AND EMPOWERS

10 Feb 2019 227 Views



<https://www.newsone.tv/trending-stories/lahooti-melo-an-ode-to-liberated-women-enthralls-enchants-and-empowers>



SUCCESS PROGRAMME @SUCCESSinSindh · Feb 9

WE ARE HERE! Looking forward to an amazing lineup of musicians and speakers on Day 1 of #LahootiMelo2019



SUCCESS PROGRAMME @SUCCESSinSindh · Feb 9

Don't forget to tag us in your tweets and photos with these hashtags!
#SUCCESSinSindh #LahootiMelo2019



ANNEXURE: AGENDA FOR THE LAHOOTI MELO

LAHOOTI MELO 2019		SCHEDULE DAY 1		9 TH FEBRUARY	
SESSIONS		SESSIONS		POWER TALKS	
TIME	SESSIONS	TIME	SESSIONS	TIME	POWER TALKS
11:00 AM	HAPPY HOUR - YOGA YOGI KAMAL KUMAR	2:00PM	#HERSTORY -DR. FOUZIA SAEED		
12:00 PM	OPENING REMARKS				
12:05 PM	AZAD AURAT JO TARANO RUBINA ABRU				
12:10 PM	LAHOOTI MELO 2019 AN ODE TO A LIBERATED WOMAN	2:15PM	KHAYAL MUSIC: ISSUES OF PAKISTANI REPRESENTATION AND EMBEDDED HISTORY IN CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP -SADAF HABIB		
1:00PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE PROJECT ZIL	2:30PM	BEHENCHARA WORKSHOP (PRE-REGISTERED ATTENDEES ONLY) -GIRLS AT DHABAS		
1:15PM	REDEFINING CONSENT: POWER, PLEASURE, PATRIARCHY	3:45PM	DANCE WORKSHOP -SHAYMA SAIYID		
2:00PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE THE SKETCHES	4:15PM	WHOSE CITY IS IT? GENDER & PUBLIC SPACE -MARVI MAZHAR		
2:15PM	A DIALOGUE ON EDUCATION: MODERATOR: AMIR RAZA MEMON GUEST: SAROAR SHAH	4:30PM	THE RADICAL POWER OF FEMALE FRIENDSHIP -HAMNA ZUBAIR		
2:45PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE SARESH & LAHOOT	4:45PM	SELF CARE AS RESISTANCE: HOW MINDFULNESS CAN HELP STUDENTS, ACTIVISTS, & ARTISTS -RAHMA MIAN		
3:00PM	BE KHAUF AZAD HAI JEENA MUJHE: FROM #WETOD TO #PRETERGAM	5:00PM	INDUS BLUES (DOCUMENTARY) -JAWWAD SHARIF & ARIEB AZHAR		
4:00PM	FORCED MARRIAGES & WOMAN'S AUTONOMY AMAR SINDHU				
4:15PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE VERU SHAN				
4:30PM	LET THE RIVERS FLOW				
5:15PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE FAHAD AHMED				
5:30PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE JEEM SE JAFAR				

LAHOOTI MELO 2019		SCHEDULE DAY 2		10 TH FEBRUARY	
SESSIONS		SESSIONS		POWER TALKS	
TIME	SESSIONS	TIME	SESSIONS	TIME	POWER TALKS
12:00 PM	FAKIR ZULFIQAR	2:00PM	PAKISTAN'S DAREDEVIL - STORY OF SAMAR KHAN		
12:15 PM	SHOUKAT FAKIR				
12:30 PM	MAI DHAI	2:15PM	THE POWER OF HASHTAG ACTIVISM -ANGELINE MALIK		
12:45 PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE TAJ MASTANI	2:30PM	INTERACTIVE SESSION		
1:00 PM	FILM TALK: LAL KABOOTAR MODERATOR: RAANIA AZAM KHAN DURRANI PANELISTS: MANSHA PASHA, AHMED ALI AKBAR, KAMIL CHIMA, HANIA CHIMA, KAMAL KHAN	2:45PM	EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN ACROSS SINDH -SUCCESS BENEFICIARY		
1:45PM	MUSIC PERFORMANCE- ALI TARIQ	3:00PM	INTERACTIVE SESSION		
2:00PM	"EVA" ON THE ROAD EVA ZU BECK	3:15PM	FOLK MUSIC & PAKISTANI STATE THE BITTERSWEET RELATION -RAFAY MAHMOOD		
2:15PM	GENDERED WORLD OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SINDH MODERATOR: NIGHAT DAAD PANELISTS: DR. QAZI SHAHID PERVAIZ, DR. FATEH BURFAT, DR. BINAFSHA SYED, DR. ANEELA ATTA RAHMAN	3:30PM	FILMISTANI -SAMINA AHMAD		
3:00PM	FREEDOM FIGHTERS: FRONTLINE STORIES OF WOMEN FIGHTING TO FREE OTHER WOMEN SHARMEEN OBAID CHINQY	3:45PM	WOMAN IN THE FRAME -HAROON HABIB		
3:15PM	A SILENT DANGER: ONLINE HARASSMENT & CYBER BULLYING NIGHAT DAAD	4:00PM	EDUCATION IN SINDH: CHALLENGES AND A WAY FORWARD -QAZI SHAHID PERVAIZ		
3:30PM	POETRY: HAFIZ NIZAMANI	4:15PM	EVERY "BODY" IS BEAUTIFUL -FRIEHA ALTAF		
3:45PM	WOMAN THROUGH THE EYES OF LITERATURE MODERATOR: WUSATULLAH KHAN PANELISTS: SAHAR GUL, WAHEEDA MAHESAR, ASIF FARRUKHI, FAISAL RAFI				
4:30PM	IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE OK - LETTING GO OF STIGMAS AROUND MENTAL HEALTH MODERATOR: MADEEHA SYED PANELISTS: ANGELINE MALIK, OMIRAN SHAFIQUE, MOHSIN KAZI				
5:15PM	DRUM CIRCLE				



EUROPEAN UNION

"This Publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and do not necessarily taken to reflect the views of the European Union."

More information about the European Union is available on:
Web: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan_en
Facebook: [European Union in Pakistan](#)
Twitter: [@EUPakistan](#)



SUCCESS

Sindh Union Council and Community Economic
Strengthening Support Programme

SUCCESS is funded by the European Union

More information about SUCCESS is available on:
Web: <https://success.org.pk>
Facebook: <https://facebook.com/successprogramme>
Twitter: [@SUCCESSinSindh](#)