Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme

(SUCCESS is funded by the European Union)
Goth Ghulam Nabi Shah in District Tando Muhammad Khan, Sindh is one of the cleanest villages in the country. The residents of the village are ready to accept a challenge against their claim, especially the women who are leading a clean and green revolution in this far-flung village they call home.
What is so special about this particular village? What is special is the fact that after being empowered by Sindh Union Council And Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) Programme and NRSP, the villagers have taken their training about Water, Immunization, Sanitation and Education (WISE) to heart. They haven’t just learned from the various development and educational opportunities provided by SUCCESS and NRSP; they have adopted and adapted the interventions that were discussed and shared with them according to their needs and are now ready to share their success.

Ghulam Nabi Shah is a predominantly Hindu religious minority village, home to farmers and day labourers. Resident women say they did not get much attention before SUCCESS teams came and conducted baseline studies and created poverty scorecards. They recall that they were organized into Community Organisation (CO), Village Organisation (VO), and finally affiliated with a Local Support Organisation (LSO), which in their case, is LSO Lakhat.
Since then, their Community Resource Persons (CRPs), including Amanat, have conducted several awareness and training sessions which comprise of health, hygiene, immunization, reproductive health, environment, sanitation, water purification and much more.

A visit to the village reveals that inspired by their learning with SUCCESS and NRSP, the women of the village have convinced the men of the community to pitch in. Through Community Physical Infrastructure (CPI) scheme, they have built a road that is 860 feet long by raising Rs. 14,000 amongst themselves and taking a CPI grant of Rs. 350,000. This road is swept clean morning and evening by community members and is as neat as the rest of the village.
Communal front yards of residents’ houses now have trash collecting pits which were built by the community in a war against trash and waste, from homes and from the farm animals the community members own. This was their first collective venture as part of their WISE training. The same trash that littered their streets and courtyards before and worked as a breeding ground for diseases, mosquitoes and flies in now disposed off in a sanitary manner.
They try their best to burn organic material and bury the rest in a bigger pit they have dug outside the village.
One of the community members, Wali, is proud of sharing the fact that two other incredibly important things happened after their WISE training. They got water from their water pumps tested for diseases with the help of the SUCCESS team and found out which pumps provided clean water safe for human consumption. These pumps were painted green. The others were painted red. They avoided drinking water from those pumps but use the water for chores.
Second, as part of a sanitation drive and to cull open defecation, they built small toilets next to a dozen homes, which are used by all now. The toilets are simply constructed and are kept clean as a communal responsibility by the women. Wali happily reports that due to toilet usage and washing hands afterwards, their children do not fall ill as frequently as before and their own dignity is restored.
They are further helped by regular immunization and the children learning in NRSP supported SABAQ center.
The women have also enlisted the help of a fellow villager by the name of Fakeero Thakur to keep the village clean. He works as a voluntary sweeper and has been provided with a hand trolley through communal funds to collect trash and dispose it in the larger trash pit close to the village.
The women of Ghulam Nabi Shah, with their persistence and perseverance, are heroes, even if they laugh off the grand title. In a world where more and more trash is generated by unchecked consumption and commercially funded food becomes a norm, they are thriving as active citizens who take pride in learning more about reducing, reusing and recycling. They are champions of practicality, seeing value and good sense in conserving and using clean water, sticking to sanitary and hygienic way of living, immunizing their children and hence maximizing their potential of a good life. Villages, and even cities, can learn a lesson or two from these purveyors of a "clean" revolution!

Words & Photos by Nuznat Saadia Siddiqi