



# Stories of Resilience and Empowerment from District Khyber





## Preface

In the field of development, pursuing positive change involves not only vision and devotion but also the joint efforts of organisations committed to producing real impact. The pages that follow reveal a woven collection of success stories that result from the harmonious confluence of dedication, invention, and collaboration. This collection of case studies shows the paradigm-changing potential of programmes led by the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) and HelpAge International, which have been generously sponsored by the BMZ via HelpAge Germany.

The stories you are about to read are about people, not numbers, milestones, or achievements. They are about resilient individuals who have embraced change, communities that went through transformation, and cultures that witnessed the blossoming of hope. Each case study looks into a different aspect of the multifaceted projects, demonstrating the effects of sustained efforts in income generation, the delicate art of peacebuilding, the empowerment of women as architects of their destinies, and the intergenerational exchange that forges bridges to a more harmonious future.

We are grateful to the SRSP, HelpAge International, and BMZ for their firm support of these efforts. Their united vision, driven by compassion and fuelled by the desire for good change, has made these success stories possible. As you read through the pages of this booklet, may you be inspired by the perseverance of those who have overcome adversity and are driven to contribute to the ongoing narrative of empowerment, peace, and prosperity.

**Syed Moez Kakakhail**  
**Country Director**  
**HelpAge International**





## Introduction

The "Promotion of Peace and Development Initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province" is a three-year project funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through HelpAge Deutschland (HAD) and, implemented by Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) and HelpAge International (HAI). The project aims to contribute to peace and development initiatives in Khyber district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province by promoting social and economic structures and livelihoods in the area.

In 2009/10, an armed conflict in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan led to the displacement of 447,924 families from tribal areas. Upon their return in 2016, internally displaced persons (IDPs) faced challenges such as destroyed livelihoods, poor health, and hygiene, limited educational opportunities, increased violence, crime rates, and security risks. The conflict not only damaged basic infrastructure but also eroded local norms and culture.


Recognizing the need for social and economic reconstruction, the project employs a multi-sector approach, emphasizing community mobilization to identify the needs of senior citizens. Active involvement of senior citizens committees is deemed crucial for achieving participatory, equitable, and sustainable peace and development in the region. By prioritising the needs of older people and people with disabilities, the project has empowered these marginalised communities through the formation of self-help groups, livelihood, and leisure activities that contributing to the overall peace and development process in the Khyber district . This project serves as a model for addressing the specific challenges faced by older people and people with disabilities in the conflict-affected regions.

## Acknowledgment

HelpAge International expresses gratitude to the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for funding the three-year project "Promotion of Peace and Development Initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province" through HelpAge Deutschland (HAD), implemented by Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) and HelpAge International (HAI).

We extend our sincere appreciation to the team involved in developing this case study booklet. Special thanks go to Faisal Hussain, the Communication Officer, who developed this document under the supervision of Syed Moez-ud-Din Kakakhail – Country Director, Shahzado Khaskheli – Head of Programs, and Abdul Jalil – Inclusion and Advocacy Coordinator.

Additionally, we also express our gratitude to the Sarhad Rural Support Program – SRSP team including Asad Qadir, Sartaj Afridi, Bibrak Afrdi and Ashfaq Afridi for their technical support in collecting and compiling the booklet content. In our commitment to honoring the norms and cultures of Khyber District, we have opted to utilize AI-generated images of female beneficiaries. Through this decision, we aim to show respect for and uphold the values and traditions of the community while still effectively representing the female beneficiaries in our work.





A group of approximately 20 men are gathered outdoors in a circle, seated on red plastic chairs. They are engaged in a meeting or discussion. The men are dressed in a mix of traditional Islamic attire, including white thobes and ghutra head coverings, and modern casual clothing like jackets and sweaters. In the center of the circle, there is a small wooden table and a blue cooler. The setting is a paved area with trees and a building in the background. A decorative border with a colorful geometric pattern runs along the top of the image. An orange banner with white text is positioned in the upper right corner. The bottom corners of the image feature abstract geometric shapes in shades of orange and red.

## **Role of Senior Citizens Committees (SCC) in Peace and Development Initiatives**





## Transformative Role of Senior Citizens Committees (SCC) in Resolving Long-Standing Disputes

The establishment of SCCs, incorporating both older and younger generations, offers a hopeful way to solve long-standing tribal disputes and build harmonious community relations. By tapping into the wisdom and experience of older people, these initiatives can guide communities towards a more peaceful and collaborative future, rooted in their cultural heritage.

One notable case of conflict resolution was facilitated by the members of the Senior Citizen Committee, of Madina Colony Falahi Committee, which effectively addressed a prolonged dispute between tribes. The case revolved around a poor security guard in the local Torkhel Market. Due to confidentiality, we will keep his name confidential in the document. An unfortunate incident occurred during his night duty when multiple shops were robbed. The shop owners accused security guard of neglect and demanded a return for their losses. The situation worsened as his tribe reacted strongly, leading to a long dispute between the two groups that extended to seven years.

The establishment of the Madina Colony Falahi Committee has been marked as a turning point in the resolution of this dispute. Including older people who were part of the committee, the seniors brought the issue before the SCC for resolution. Through comprehensive consultations with both groups involved, the SCC settled a dispute. The committee's decision specified that the security guard would accept his negligence and offer modest compensation to the affected shop owners.

Accepting the decision of the SCC of Madina Colony, both parties agreed to settle their differences. This landmark decision not only resolved the long-standing dispute but also transformed a deep-rooted hatred into a new friendship.





## Senior Citizens Committee's Success in Resolving a Land Dispute Among Brothers

In a close-knit community, an intense land dispute had been growing among seven brothers, weakening family bonds and community interconnection. The root of the conflict was the uneven distribution of land, an issue that gave rise to deep-rooted hatred and tension among the siblings. The rising dispute not only damaged the brothers' relationships but also challenged the community's social harmony.

During this backdrop, the Senior Citizens Committee of Silak Abad Mandi has stepped forward as mediators to address the complex dispute. The SCC members understood that a harmonious resolution could not only rely on legal parameters but required a solution that included both cultural norms and individual aims.

Guided by this code, the SCC members initiated a series of discussions with the disputing parties. These discussions provided a safe space for complaints to be expressed and for aims to be understood. The SCC members recognised that a sustainable solution required an approach that went beyond financial considerations and property rights. Instead, it needed a restoration of brotherly bonds and a shared commitment to well-being.

After careful negotiations and keen dialogues, the SCC members facilitated an extraordinary breakthrough. They persuaded the seven brothers to accept a solution that was both just and agreeable—a unanimous decision to re-distribute the land equally among them. **“This outcome was reached not by force but through a deep understanding of the brothers' concerns and a collective desire to renew the unity that had once defined their relationships. Indeed, the SCC members reawaken the light of brotherhood in their hearts.”** Remarked Haji Hikmat, SSC President.



## Wisdom in Action: Senior Citizens' Role in Resolving Water Dispute

For several years, community members in Bara, District Khyber had been involved in a dispute over the allocation of irrigation water. Equitable water distribution was crucial to the farmers' livelihoods. Unfortunately, the absence of a fair distribution mechanism led to numerous conflicts among villagers, causing physical injuries and damaging relationships among neighbors.

The frequent clashes not only disrupted the community's harmony but also posed a serious threat to the agricultural output. Crop damage appeared because of the ongoing dispute, and it became clear that immediate action was needed to alleviate the conflict's impact on the community. Recognising the urgency of the situation, the Senior Citizens Committee (SCC) of Qazi Shameer stepped forward to mediate and resolve the water dispute. SCC initiated a series of discussions involving all relevant parties. These discussions provided a safe space for participants to voice their concerns, express grievances, and present their viewpoints. Through patient dialogue, the SCC guided the participants toward a shared understanding of the necessity for a resolution.

As consultations progressed, the SCC's efforts proved successful. By promoting a spirit of cooperation and understanding, the SCC managed to guide the parties toward a consensus-based solution. A crucial turning point was reached when all parties acknowledged the importance of ending the dispute for the betterment of the entire community.

**“This was a complex and long-standing dispute. As members of SCC, Qazi Shameer, we facilitated discussions and consultations to bring the parties to an agreement to resolve the issue. We extend our gratitude to SRSP and HelpAge International for providing us with this platform to utilize the wisdom and experience of our elders in resolving such matters.”** Shared Bashir, President of Qazi Shameer SCC.





## Contribution of Senior Citizens Committees in Community Development and Peacebuilding Initiatives

In the remote villages of District Khyber, Pakistan, Senior Citizens Committees (SCCs) have become encouragements for positive change. Comprising dedicated members, these committees have undertaken self-driven initiatives to uplift their community, particularly focusing on improving the lives of senior citizens.

Before the formation of SCCs, the region was facing substantial drug abuse issues. In response, SCCs launched impactful anti-drug campaigns, educating the youth about the dangers of substance abuse. The success of these initiatives led to a decline in drug abuse, fostering a sense of security and hope within families. SCCs extended their impact by collaborating with various government departments, such as irrigation, public health, agriculture, livestock, and WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority). This collaborative approach facilitated comprehensive solutions to longstanding communal problems.

One outstanding collaboration was seen in the HAMDARD Kaly Falahi Committee with Uma Welfare Trust, organizing an eye medical camp that facilitated 70 cataract surgeries for elderly individuals. This highlighted the positive impact that SCCs, in partnership with NGOs, could achieve in addressing critical health issues affecting senior citizens. As SCCs worked closely with government agencies and local organizations, they became a formidable force for positive change. Advocating for the needs and rights of senior citizens, they inspired the youth to actively contribute to shaping the future of their communities.

The SCCs' success story is a proof to the transformative power of community-driven initiatives, addressing immediate challenges while laying the groundwork for a more harmonious and resilient community. With the elderly and the youth working together for a brighter tomorrow, SCCs' efforts will leave a lasting legacy of compassion and empowerment throughout the villages of Khyber.





**Vocational Skills Training Program**





## Transforming Lives through Vocational Skills Training: Mr. Zardad's Success Story

Mr. Zardad's case is evidence to the transformative power of vocational skills training in improving the livelihoods of youth in the conflict-affected region of the Khyber district. Mr. Zardad 22-year-old hails from Sialak Abad Mandikas, Sepah, Khyber district, where he was unable to continue his education beyond the 8th grade due to the security operations in Newly Merged Tribal Districts formerly known as Federally Administrated Tribal Areas - FATA. He and his parents were forced to flee their village, which further disrupted his education and prospects for employment.

He shares his home with his elderly parents, wife and one son. However, Mr. Zardad's life took a positive turn when SRSP, with the support of the BMZ-funded project, initiated a vocational skills training program for youth. Recognizing the importance of skills training, he joined the tailoring training program and completed the three-month training program. During this period, he acquired tailoring skills and learned to operate the necessary equipment, such as sewing machines, cutting and designing, etc.

Upon graduation from the vocational skills program, Mr. Zardad opened his tailoring shop, where he applied his newly acquired skills and knowledge.

He shares happily **“Thanks to the training and the support provided by SRSP and HelpAge International, I have been able to start my own business and earn a steady income of 25,000/- per month. This is a significant improvement over my previous situation, where I was unemployed and idle.”**



## Vocational Skills Training Turns Youth Dreams into Reality

Mr. Shah Faisal is a 33-year-old resident of Bara, Khyber district, who never went to school. He was learning electrical work in a local market when the security forces initiated a military operation in the area. Shah Faisal's lack of education and skills hindered his employment prospects, making it difficult for him to support himself and his family. The instability in his district further worsened his situation and forced him to flee his home and unfortunately, he had to leave his electrical work which was his only source of income.

Shah Faisal learned about the vocational skills training program initiated by SRSP with the financial support of BMZ for the youth of the Khyber district. He applied to join the electrician group for three months, where he learned advanced-level skills that were highly beneficial for him. After completing the training, Shah Faisal returned to the area and started working with local contractors earning more than 40,000 Pak rupees per month.

**“When I came back to my hometown, most of the homes were turned into rubble, people didn't have any source of income, our schools were not open, The youth of the district have didn't any activities. At least I had skills that gave hope for a living.”** He said





## Enabling Women of Khyber District, Live a Dignified Life through Vocational Training

Basmeena (54 years), a resident of a remote village of Khyber District was living in extreme poverty after her husband migrated in search of work in the aftermath of unrest in Khyber District. Financial constraints made her life difficult, as she was the only person looking after her family comprising seven children including a son of eight years with cognitive disability.

Lack of access to public health facilities in her village further worsened the situation and it was very difficult for her to bear the cost of medicines for his son. Once the project activities were initiated in her village, she applied for vocational training. After a thorough assessment at the community level, Ms. Basmeena was selected for the training based on her immediate and urgent financial needs. After her enrolment and training for 3 months in hand embroidery, she acquired a new skill that enabled her to do work from home and at the same time look after her child with a disability. The training enabled Basmeena to initiate small business at home by taking small work orders from clients and providing finished products without leaving home.

'It is only because of this training that I can earn almost 10,000 PKR per month which help me look after the needs of my family, especially my son. Before, I was unable to take my son to a health facility. Thanks to SRSP and HelpAge International for making my life better' said, Ms. Basmeena.

Vocational training empowered and enabled rural women to effectively contribute to family income at the same time provided sustainable solutions towards a better life.





## Rising from Adversity: Muhammad Rafique's story of transformation

Muhammad Rafique, a 56-year-old living in Yousaf Talab, a small village of Sipah Tribe, Khyber District faced various challenges in the aftermath of the conict which started in 2009-10. Lack of employment opportunities in the region coupled with nancial constraints made it dicult for Mr. Rafique to meet the daily expenses of a household. With limited resources and fear of leaving his village, migration to a safer city was not an option for him. Lack of education and skill made it tough for Mr. Rafique to nd decent work for himself in all those years and he relied on traditional sources of income such as harvesting in the eld and doing labour work on daily wages.

The field team identied Mr. Rafique as a beneciary and in line with Mr. Rafique interest in motorcycle repairing, he was selected and started the course as a eld professional.

**“Vocational skills training breathed new life into my journey, transforming the pages of experience into chapters of expertise. It's never too late to learn new skills and gain expertise; I strongly believe that learning does not slow down with age,”** remarked Mr. Rafique.

Mr. Rafique, also a member of the Senior Citizens Council, plays an active role in catering to the needs of the community. From tackling community issues to mobilizing the youth, he is setting an example as a Community Champion. While the local community members are inspired by his hardworking efforts for their village, he has become a true champion for his family for starting a new phase of his life at this age. ‘After completion of training, I opened a motorcycle repair workshop in Dograh Chowk (a small market in my village). Now I have also created jobs for some of the youth where I am teaching them these same skills and I am earning a decent income than before.





## **Vocational Skills Training Program Opening doors for the education of Mairaj's Daughter**

I am very happy after this training at least I am able to bear the school fees of my daughter, Mr. Miraj Said Happily. Miraj Khan, a 27-year-old residing in the village of Sheikh Abad, Sepah Tribe, faced numerous challenges upon returning to the area after the military operation against terrorism. The most pressing issue was the lack of employment opportunities, which greatly affected Miraj's life. Before the training he used to work as a taxi driver, but it was tough and earning in which he hardly covers his daily expenses, as well as children's education. However, a turning point arrived one day when Miraj saw an opportunity of learning technical skills through BMZ funded project.

Miraj availed this opportunity and took a break from his taxi job to register for the Mobile Repairing Skills training. His determination to improve his circumstances kept him motivated despite the hardships his family suffered during this time.

The training program lasted for three months, during which Miraj devoted himself to learning and acquiring new skills. Despite the challenges his family faced at home, he remained steadfast in his commitment. Upon completion of the training, Miraj received a well-deserved certificate, bringing immense joy to his heart. The training had equipped him with invaluable knowledge and expertise.

After completing the training, Miraj took a bold step and rented a cabin in Speen Qabar Bazar. Nowadays, he proudly supports his family through his newly established mobile repair business. To ensure smooth operations, he has even hired a helper to assist him. At the end of each month, Miraj diligently sets aside some savings to invest in the growth and development of his business. Miraj looks back at his journey with immense gratitude towards SRSP and HelpAge International for providing him with the opportunity to undergo training and overcome the challenges that burdened his life.





## Women Empowerment





## A Triumph of NRM Training: The Inspiring Journey of Jamala Bibi

**“I am very happy to benet from Natural Resource Management (NRM) training. All previous trainings held by other organizations in my village were age-bound and I couldn't participate. I am very thankful to HelpAge International and SRSP for integrating Older People particularly older women in NRM training.”** s 65-year-old Jamala Bibi resident of Wazirabad, Aka Khel, Khyber district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan.

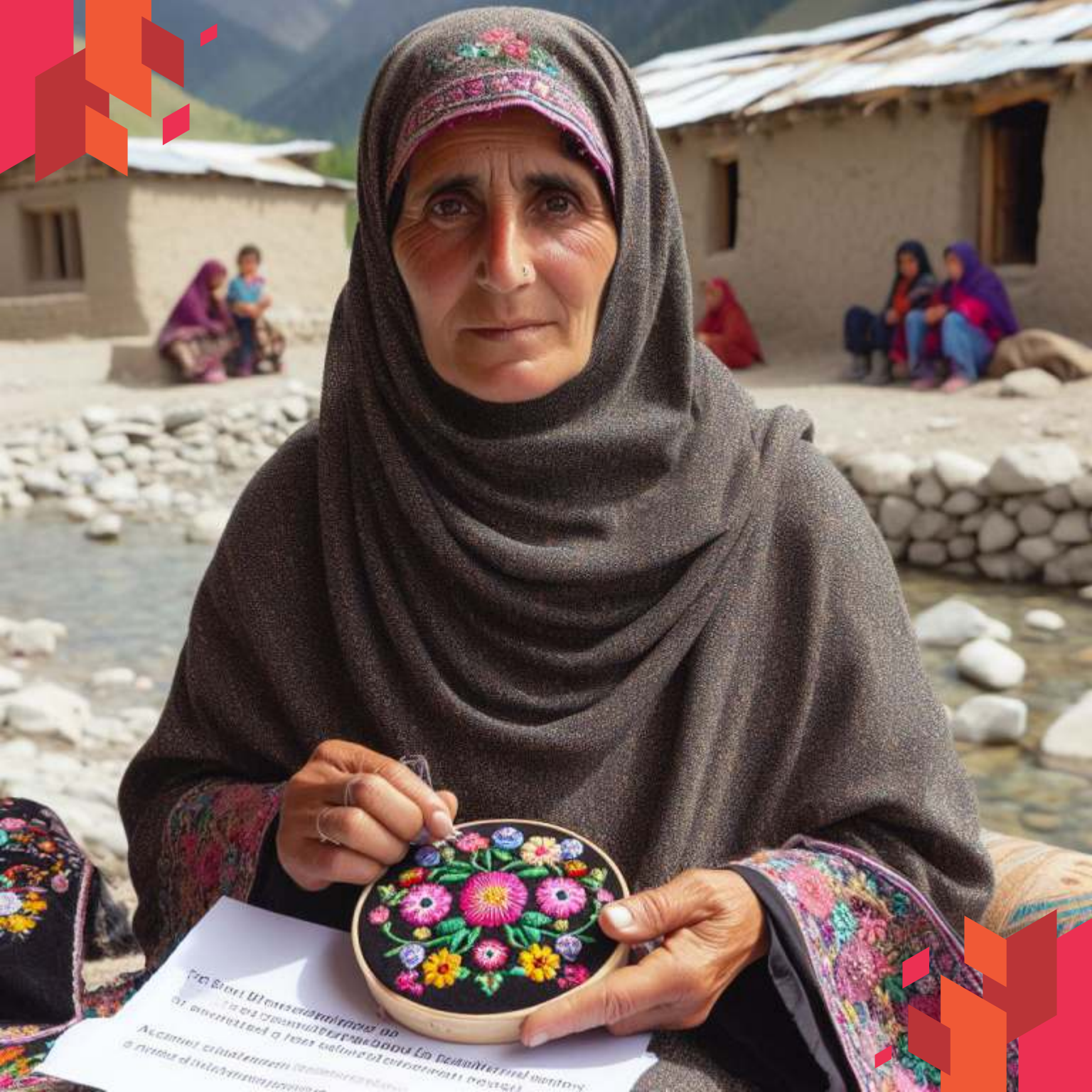
Despite owning her own land, Jamala had been unable to cultivate it as her husband worked away from home and traditionally only man can work in land, However, after completing her training, where she acquired skills in onion nursery cultivation and learned about the vital role of women in agriculture, Jamala recognized the untapped potential of onions crop and the suitability of the local region for cultivation. This motivated her to cultivate onions on her once-barren land.

Jamala's first harvest yielded impressive results in both quantity and income. **"Selling the onions in the nearby market brought me a favorable price"** she says. Subsequent seasons proved even more prosperous, leading to significant profits. The success was so remarkable that her husband joined in, supporting her efforts by opening a shop in the local market.

Jamala's increased income not only supports her family but also empowers her in making personal choices. She is proud that she now also contributes to her children's education.







## Basra Bibi's Journey: Overcoming Challenges for a Better Family Life

Basra Bibi, a 50-year-old resident of Village Jhalandar Kalay Malik Den Khail of Tehsil Bara in District Khyber, is a strong and determined woman who has faced numerous challenges in her life. With her husband suffering from mental health issues and unable to contribute financially, Basra Bibi became the sole provider for her family. Despite the overwhelming responsibilities, including caring for her 8 daughters, 2 of whom are disabled, she relied on sewing as her primary source of income, earning around 18,000 rupees per month.

Basra Bibi's life took a positive turn when she was selected for **“Assistance in setting up enterprises in small businesses for older women”** of project. The project provides essential resources such as showcases, racks, water tanks, sewing machines, and solar plates to older women to run home-based businesses. As per the need identification, Basra Bibi was chosen to receive a sewing machine and solar panel.

With this support, she further strengthened her sewing center and her monthly income increased to 30,000-35,000 rupees. The additional sewing machine enabled her disabled daughters to actively participate in sewing. Moreover, the provision of a solar panel addressed the issue of inconsistent electricity supply, enhancing their overall quality of life and supporting their income-generating activities.

Basra Bibi expressed her deepest appreciation to SRSP and HelpAge International for transforming her life and that of her family. No longer reliant on others' charity, she can now take care of her husband's health, save for her daughters' dowries, and afford their education. With increased financial stability, Basra Bibi's inspiring decision to educate her two daughters showcases her strong commitment to ensuring their future success and empowerment.





## Empowering Resilience - Bi Jana Bibi's Journey from Hardship to Success

Bi Jana Bibi, a 68-year-old resident of Niaz Baran Kalay village in the Bara region of Khyber, found herself facing immense challenges due to her husband's disability. As the primary breadwinner for her family, Bi Jana Bibi started a journey to overcome hardship and create a dignified life for her family. Bi Jana Bibi's family consisted of her husband, who was unable to perform difficult work due to disability, and their two young daughters. In an area where manual labor was a common source of income, the family's financial prospects were low. To improve their conditions, Bi Jana Bibi decided to start a small grocery shop. However, her entrepreneurial effort faced unexpected challenges. The security situation in her area deteriorated, forcing Bi Jana Bibi and her family to flee to an adjacent area of Peshawar for their safety.

Upon their return, they discovered that their grocery shop had been destroyed, leaving them in a terrible situation. Financial restraints made it impossible for Bi Jana Bibi to re-establish her grocery shop, as funds were needed to construct shelves and racks to display her products. Bi Jana Bibi's story took a turn for the better when she received support from the BMZ FATA project, specifically through **“Assistance in setting up enterprises in small businesses for older women”** initiative. This support came in the form of racks and shelves, vital components needed to revive her grocery shop. This intervention was a lifeline for her and her family.

The in-kind support provided by the project had a transformative impact on Bi Jana Bibi's life. With renewed determination and the necessary infrastructure for her shop, she was able to re-establish her grocery business. **"The in-kind support of SRSP and HelpAge International helped me to re-stand firmly and to revive my closed business again. Without their support, I was unable to restore my destroyed grocery shop."** Remarked Bi-Jana



## Sports Activities







## **Empowering Students through Recreational Activities in Government Higher Secondary School Kalanga, BARA Khyber District**

"Before, we were just watching sports on TV, cheering for others. Now, we're the ones getting cheers in our physical education class. It's like being in our own sports show! Basmeena – Grade 10 Student expressed with joy. Before the implementation of the project, physical education classes in Government schools in Bara Khyber were limited, with students often sitting on the ground and engaging in gossip and other old conventional games like hide and seek or run and catch. Moreover, girls had little exposure to sports, with limited opportunities for participation in school settings.

By addressing the lack of sports opportunities, particularly for girls, the project promoted a sense of empowerment, physical fitness, sportsmanship, and positive behavior such as teamwork, and cooperation among students. Basmeena and Rozina from class 10th of Government Higher Secondary School Kalanga joyfully shared how they had only watched volleyball and rounder on sports channels before. Now, they were personally playing these games during physical education periods, experiencing a newfound love for sports and physical activity.

The engagement and participation of students, as well as the positive response from teachers, demonstrate the far-reaching effects of such initiatives in educational institutions. By promoting inclusivity, gender equality, and an active lifestyle, the BMZ-funded project serves as a valuable model for future efforts to empower students and teachers through sports activities in Government schools. Ultimately, the project's impact exceeds the physical benefits of sports, as it contributes to building confident, healthy, and empowered individuals who are better equipped to face life's challenges and to contribute to peace initiatives in the region. The recreational activity left a lasting impact on the school and its students, leading to positive changes in various aspects.





## Empowering Dreams Through Cricket: Rafi Ullah's Journey

**“Cricket is my dream and passion, I want to become a renowned cricketer to represent my country at international level” enthusiastically shared Rafiullah.**

Rafiullah, hailing from the remote village of Dro Ada AKA Khel, Pakistan, is one such individual who dared to dream big. Despite facing numerous difficulties, including the lack of resources and equipment, he developed his cricketing talent with firm determination.

Cricket is deeply rooted in the culture of Dro Ada AKA Khel, but it is also an expensive game. Young Rafiullah faced financial constraints that prevented him from having his own cricket kit. Undeterred by this setback, Rafiullah continued in his passion for cricket, practicing tirelessly with nothing more than a tennis ball.

Rafiullah's dedication to the game did not go unnoticed. The village's Senior Citizens Committee (SSC) recognized his potential and nominated him for the provision of a cricket kit. Responding to the SSC's request, the project provided Rafiullah with a complete hardball cricket kit. This moment was more than just the acquisition of bats, balls, and pads; it was the manifestation of hope and opportunity. Rafi's passion for cricket reached to new heights. The project went a step further, connecting Rafiullah with the Malik Cricket Academy. This proved to be a turning point in his cricketing journey. The academy provided professional guidance and mentorship, helping Rafiullah refine his skills and hone his talent. Under the careful guidance of mentors at the Malik Academy, Rafiullah's cricketing skills continued to blossom. His hard work paid off as he secured a spot on the Under-19 District Peshawar cricket team, representing his region at the youth level. His remarkable journey reached a milestone when he scored a century in one of the matches, showcasing his exceptional talent and dedication.











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