

OSDI's Poverty Alleviation Model

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Pakistan ranks 5th¹, amongst the Asian countries to have nearly 24.7%² people living in severe poverty. Even though the country is blessed with an ideal geo-strategic location and natural resources; but, it has not been able to progress successfully. There are several controllable and uncontrollable factors associated to this misery - such as economic shocks, unemployment, high illiteracy ratio, unawareness, political instability, unplanned reforms and natural catastrophes.

Pakistan has a total population size of 212 million people³, amongst which 63.62%⁴ people live in rural areas. Majority of the people living in the rural communities of the country are deprived of their basic living rights. Lack of opportunities, low financial empowerment and strong feudal systems act as prominent hurdles which seem to create barriers for these rural people to move out from the inter-generational poverty. In order to survive, these people are barely left with any choice but to take loans or favors in kind from the rich feudal lords who later demand or expect favors from these poverty struck people. Failure to do so, either results in physical or psychological tortures or social boycotting; as a result either the people prefer to abandon their villages, face the wrath or die.

Organization for Social Development Initiatives (OSDI) is a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of Marine Group of Companies (MRGC); a well-reputed business conglomerate of Pakistan which aims to play its role to uplift these susceptible rural people to improve their lives. Formed in 2009, OSDI has been proactively engaged in creating a positive social change within the lives of the people living in vulnerable rural communities without compromising on their dignity and integrity. Religiously following the 1st Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which says, "No Poverty", OSDI believes in empowering the rural communities to propose, accept and participate in projects which can help in poverty alleviation.

"Poverty" is a very brutal word. It not only kills the self-respect and hopes of an individual; but, it also damages the society at large. The effects of which, gradually keep multiplying day-by-day. There is no immediate remedy to cure this disease but, to enable the affected people to be the change they want to see with little advocacy, mobilization and capacity building. I believe that you can only help a person when he/she is prepared to be helped for and to do that you need to communicate and motivate the people for change; because nothing is impossible. I believe, it's nothing but the willingness and desire for change that can help in creating a positive impact. Since, these under-privileged people are left at the mercy of their own fate; they get misguided and they end up being subject to depression, hunger, negligence which further leads to the birth

¹ <https://www.adb.org/countries/pakistan/poverty>

² https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CB_PAK-2.pdf

³ Economic Survey 2018-19

⁴ http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_18/12-Population.pdf

of criminals and later on, the government is blamed for the calamities caused. I think we really need to redirect our thinking procedures and figure out the elementary reasons that lead to such issues. In my opinion, if opportunities are provided these rural people can make marvels.

OSDI has a two pronged approach which was carefully drafted after a thorough research and in depth analysis into the causes of poverty. The poverty alleviation model of OSDI has been indigenously designed; to provide prospects of holistic development to the rural communities so they may uplift themselves from poverty without compromising on their integrity. Responding to the basic needs, OSDI aims to help create opportunities that can result in the increase of monthly income of the deprived rural households along with decreasing the monthly expense levels paving the way for economic stability; which helps in lowering of the risks of external shocks. As a positive outcome of financial empowerment, the beneficiary can move towards overcoming his/her inter-generational debts, create assets, become food secure, engage in capacity building and above all create a multiplier effect by helping others from his/her community either by sharing their success story or financially facilitating their relatives, neighbours or friends. He/She can become more socially aware about his/her rights. To avoid being deceived or falling into poverty he/she will try to secure the future of his/her children by educating them, so they may live a better life.

Change is a gradual process. It trickles from generation to generation; each trying to outstand the other; the real challenge is to keep the basic pillar strong. OSDI's Poverty Alleviation Model has been formed in response to the Sustainable Development Goals which offer an international remedy to conquer poverty. Livelihood Assistance Program (LAP), Community Development Program (CDP) and Food Security Program (FSP) are the three core programs of OSDI which are further divided into various sub-projects aiming to create a holistic effect that can inculcate positive social change in the lives of the under-privileged rural people; by catering to their basic needs.

Livelihood Assistance Program (LAP) is the backbone of OSDI's strategically crafted programs. This program caters to the 8th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which aims to provide decent work and economic growth opportunities for the people living in the rural communities for poverty

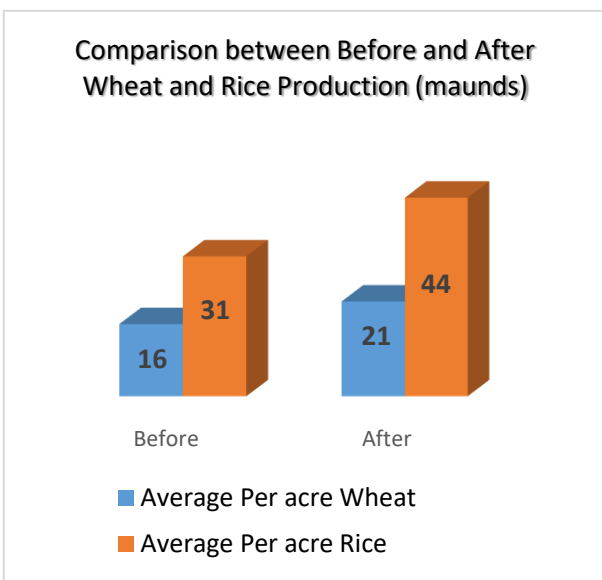


Figure 1: Comparison between Before and After Wheat and Rice Production in maunds

alleviation. It is also linked to the 2nd SDG which intends to overcome hunger. Under LAP, OSDI has three sub-projects each aiming to create or provide opportunities for financial empowerment in the lives of the vulnerable people. Agriculture Development Project (ADP), helps the farmers with provision of seeds, pesticides, weedicides, fertilizers etc. to increase their crop yields. More crop yields would help in more income generation. The farmers are trained about modern agrarian techniques and practices that can help them build upon their capacity and improve their farming skills. 1,936 beneficiaries have been successfully facilitated to harvest 6,588 acres of farmland across 5 districts. Outstanding results of crop produce have been witnessed upon conclusion of Pre and Post Intervention results. Amongst the two key crops

i.e. wheat and rice; the average per acre growth of wheat crop has raised from 16 maunds to 21 maunds and for rice it improved from 31 maunds to 44 maunds after OSDI's intervention.

Livestock Development Project (LDP) facilitates the landless farmers to create income and assets by livestock rearing and breeding. Veterinary experts are invited to train and educate these farmers for breeding, shed maintenance, health-keeping and fodder preparation of the livestock provided by OSDI. Moreover, a food safety net is also weaved around the beneficiary household through provision of sufficient dairy products within their homes. 348 farmers from 6 districts have been helped with distribution of 987 animals. These animals include cows, calves, buffaloes, oxen's, does and bucks. Each phase spans around a period of 4 – 6 months. For the educated and jobless youth, OSDI offers Small Rural Enterprise Project (SREP) under which beneficiaries are provided with opportunities to initiate their own small businesses such as grocery store, tailoring shop, rickshaw (a kind of three wheeled taxi), etc. Basic financial literacy trainings are provided to the beneficiaries so they may easily maintain their day-to-day sales and manage their finances accordingly. 34 beneficiaries have initiated their businesses under SREP. The average monthly profit per beneficiary is PKR 11,600.

To foster sustainable development empowering and enabling the entire group or society is extremely important; so each member realizes their role and responsibility for a collective benefit. In the Community Development Program (CDP) of OSDI, long term partnerships are created with the targeted rural communities so they may become aware and have the sense of ownership towards the project they are facilitated in. There are several projects under the umbrella of CDP such as Education – a project designed following the 4th SDG which aims to ensure provision of quality Education For All (EFA). OSDI has either initiated, constructed or supported nearly 22 schools in its focused rural communities.

Several initiatives have been taken in these schools from placement of qualified teachers, focus is made on female literacy, provision of teaching and learning tools or equipment's and course books, uniforms facilitations, etc. are included. Aggressive community mobilization campaigns have also been held to increase in student enrolments in these educational facilities. 2,423 students are acquiring quality primary education in these schools. Besides this, 12 youth have been educated in Basic Adult Literacy classes and now efforts are being made to begin the vocational training courses in collaboration with our partner organizations.

OSDI has made it mandatory for any beneficiary prior to being nominated in any of our projects

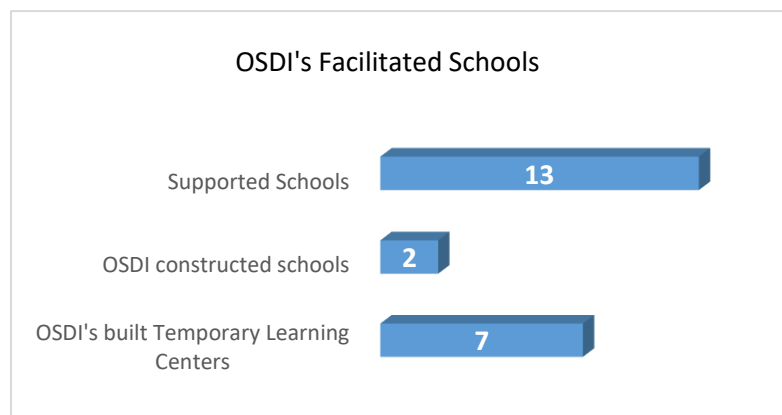


Figure 2: OSDI's Facilitated Schools

to get his/her out-of-school children enrolled in school else they cannot be considered eligible to participate in any of our programs. Surprise visits to beneficiary homes and communities are made on regular basis, to check upon the student's absenteeism or unnecessary irregularity to school. Teachers' attendance is strictly monitored by the members of the School

Management Committee (SMC), formed in collaboration with community members based on the credibility and repute of

the representative as per the village elders and influential. These people act as voluntary members for the safe-keeping and smooth running of the project even after OSDI's exit from the community.

	Health-care Facilities Organized	Total Patients Treated
Free General Medical Camps	362	16,048
Primary Health-care Centers	2	13,981

Table 1: Health-care Facilities Organized by OSDI since inception

In my view, provision of quality health-care is the second most important need of an individual after food security; for which people tend to spend beyond their capacity. Many a times, this burden is willingly accepted only to save the life or relieve the pain of the loved one. One visit to the

doctor results in approximately PKR 1000 – PKR 2000 per visit expense. In health-care project, 30,029 patients have been treated in 362 Free General Medical Camps (GMCs) and 2 Primary Health-care Centers (PHCs) of OSDI. It has been observed that majority of the people living in our areas of interventions have been suffering from Respiratory Tract Infections (RTI), Gastro Intestinal Infection (GIT), Body Weakness, Anemia, Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) or Skin Infection. Altogether, 11,366 students have been de-wormed in Mardan (KPK), Matiari, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Khairpur and Jacobabad (Sindh) and Lasbela (Baluchistan) districts. 1,826 young mothers and newly born babies have been facilitated under Maternal & Child Health-care; 9,340 patients have been aided in Hepatitis Prevention & Control Program; 614 patients treated from Tuberculosis (T.B.), 2,503 children are administered with polio vaccinations along with the support of district government. Health-care project of OSDI is in line with the 3rd SDG as acclaimed and approved globally.

42,586 beneficiaries have been trained under the Water and Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) project as per the 6th Sustainable Development Goal. This project is also linked to the Water Nearby Homes (WNH) project in which 3,620 beneficiaries have been provided with an easy access to clean drinking water within their communities through installation of 12 Solar Water Projects. Unavailability of water or its shortage results in either non-existence or unbearable circumstances for survival. Due to water facilitations, the focused communities have now been able to grow plants or kitchen gardens; health of their livestock has improved and their hardships of water fetching from approximately 4-5kms per round has reduced. This way multiple issues have been resolved. To keep a check and balance on the smooth running of WNH, OSDI has formed a Water Management Committee (WMC) following the same pattern as of SMC; in which selection of the committee members is purely based on the nominations provided by the respective community based on the credibility and repute of the member. In Miru Suleiman Goth, a small village in District Lasbela (Baluchistan) migrated families have now started to return back to their generations old village which they had to abandon due to water unavailability and hunger.

13th SDG is followed through the implementation of Natural Resource Management (NRM) in which 3,078 fruit and non-fruit

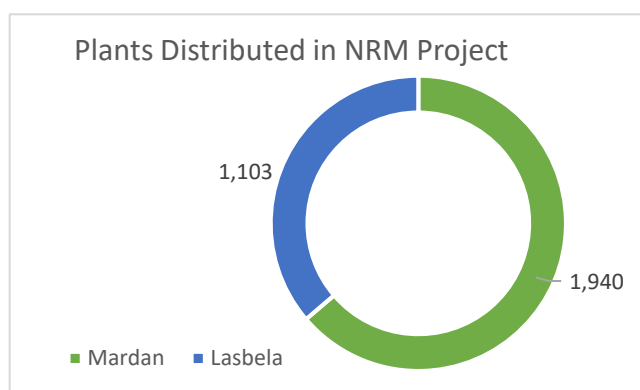


Figure 3: Break-up of Plants Distributed in NRM project

trees are planted in the focused communities of district Mardan and Lasbela; to help in temperature control and lowering, beautification and protecting of the wild life; as mostly birds migrate if shade or trees are not available. Due to OSDI's advocacy 50 fruit plants have been planted by various community members as a self-initiative. Infrastructure development is done on need basis as per the demand and request of the focused community; according to the 9th SDG. Link roads, sewerage channels, toilets, shelter homes and soil bank have been constructed.

Malnutrition is a global concern. In Pakistan, nearly 10 million children are suffering from stunted growth.⁵ Even though there has been an affirmative decrease in the number of stunted growth children from 45% (2012-13) to 38% (2017-18) but still the situation is alarming.⁶ Playing our role in minimizing the hunger issues; OSDI in line with the 2nd SDG is working on zero hunger through its Food Security Program (FSP); under which beneficiaries are supported with kitchen gardening (K.G.), poultry farming and distribution of livestock. 1,521 beneficiaries in K.G. project have been supported to cultivate 367,592 square feet of land in their courtyards or backyards. Due to this project, beneficiaries have been able to lower their kitchen expenses from PKR 100 – PKR 150 per day. Not only, have the beneficiaries been protected with sufficient quantity of healthy and nutritious vegetables at their doorstep but, their neighbours, relatives and friends have also benefitted through exchange of vegetables or as give away souvenirs. 80 beneficiary households were facilitated under the poultry farming project to breed hens and earn through selling of eggs. In this project, we distributed 2,160 hens and 240 roosters in district Matiari (Sindh).

So far, lives of more than 39,000 people from across 6 focused districts of Pakistan's 3 provinces (Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) have been improved by successful implementation of the above mentioned projects. OSDI has successfully penetrated in more than 30 revenue villages. Over the years, we have learned through various trials and errors that the more a community is psychologically prepared through mobilization, advocacy and capacity building; the more easily they progress and sustainability is created. It's pointless to keep making investments without creating long term partnerships because then the people start taking things for granted. This is based on the observations we learned from; by working in these rural communities.

Another lesson learnt is that, needs and demands of the people vary from place to place based on their circumstances and lifestyles. Like when we intervened in several villages of district Lasbela (Baluchistan) people literally pleaded us to provide them clean water or construct a school in their community. In district Mardan (KPK), people were more interested to participate in Livestock Development Project (LDP) as compared to the other income generation projects. Request/s for water provision and infrastructure development were on high demand in this district; as compared to any other project. There are several other examples of this kind that shall be narrated during the oral presentation. I will also share some really inspiring stories of some of our beneficiaries who really worked hard for change and how they conquered their fears. Last but not the least, is to keep a strong check and balance by the monitoring and evaluation team of all projects i.e. mid-term or post intervention evaluations. Then for impact analysis a survey should be conducted after sometime.

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/nutrition-0>

⁶ Economic Survey 2018-19