Transforming Lives

Case Studies of
District Ghanche, Skardu of Gilgit Baltistan
Province of Pakistan

March, 2019
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CHIP is working in partnership with Light for the World and Local Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to improve the lives and livelihood of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The communities, PWDs and their household members were visited to document their situation. During these visits PWDs shared their journey of becoming the members of CBOs and improvement in their socio-economic condition, personal and emotional wellbeing out of poverty and despair.
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Wishes Coming True
In the extreme north of Pakistan, An embodiment of nature’s perfection welcomes you alongside the cold water of Shyok River, orchids, forest, old wooden bridges, curvy roads and the tall peaks in Ghanche. The stunning beauty of the area amazed and invites you back to revisit the beauty, certainty and wilderness of these villages. But beauty comes at a cost. This is not the case for everyone as a lot of people are not blessed enough like us to move independently and to appreciate the beauty around.

The beautiful but arduous terrain and traditional housing structure make it extremely challenging for people with disabilities to enjoy and live a happy life as compare to their normal counterparts. The traditional houses are built on two levels, with lower level (5 to 6 feet) built using undressed stones with the purpose to keep the animal and to store their fodder while the upper level is residential for joint family with five to six small rooms accommodating three to four families. Every male member in the family contributes towards the joint economic sustenance of the family.

Ali Hassan 29 years old was born and brought up in village Chogho Grong, Tehsil Daghooni Yalghar, District Khaplu, Ghanche. He is married and have 2 children of ages 1 and 3 years. He is living with his family and was dependent on his family for all his and his children basic needs due to his inability to move in and outside of his house because of hands and lower body impairment. Due to the traditional housing in the area, he was dependent upon his family members to move him down to the street and to climb down the makeshift and dilapidated stairs of stones and bricks.

A ray of hope brightens and brought changes in his life, when CHIP team visited the Chogho Grong village in 2016. The team established the community based organization by introducing the concept of “inclusion for all” and visited Ali Hassan and his family to assess their socio economic and emotional situation in their difficult time. The community was mobilized to include persons with disabilities and all marginalized people to participate in community based organization meetings and decision making process. Ali Hassan started participating in the community meetings and became the active member of CBO. But to reach out to CBO office he was dependent on his family and sometime on CBO members to carry him to the office due to his inability to walk. The community members mobilized the funds with the support of CHIP to improve his accessibility from his house to CBO office. The street was paved and the stairs were leveled.

A team of doctors also visited the village and medically assessed Ali Hassan for the provision of assistive devices. Ali Hassan was provided with the wheelchair to move from his house to CBO office. Now he is very active not only in CBOs meetings but in all socialization and sports events and is working as an active event organizer of different community gatherings.

During one of the community meetings, Ali Hassan shared his thoughts about the economic dependency on his family and his desires to earn living for his children and family. He himself wished-for learning the skills of cobbler. With the support of CHIP and CBO, He learnt the skills from the cobbler and worked with his teacher to master the skill. He was also provided with a training of financial management and record keeping for running a business. He has passed primary school and easily learnt the skills of managing the finance and record of the business. Ali Hassan established a small shop of cobbler in the center of the village and is now earning a living for his children. While receiving his first earning he expressed his thoughts with eyes full of tears;

I have waited for this moment for last 28 years to contribute in family income and to bear the educational expenses of my children. Now I will be able to send my elder boy to school and will pay his school fee. I will expand my shop and will spend my earning on living of my family and will help other disabled persons to become the active members of the society”.

Ali Hassan current monthly income is Rs. 9,000. He is the only cobbler in the village and his shop is located in the center of the village that is easily accessible not only to the villagers but the people passing from main road also visit his shop for the repairing of their shoes. We wish him best of luck for his future endeavors.
Change is Possible
Rabia, 22 years old always wondered whether there will ever be a change in the pity looks of community towards her. Since her childhood, she was treated differently as compared to other children and among the young girls of her age. She was a source of fun due to her difficulty in walking and no one wanted to include her in their outdoor games and plays. She still feels the pain of stoning by her friends after losing the game to the opposite group due to her slow mobility and bad performance, which lead to her exclusion from all the future games played by the street friends in her village. From her room's window she used to watch her friends playing and enjoying in the street. Her friends usually call her with the names of “Lungr” poke her and make fun of her. Behaviors like these took its toll on Rabia’s confidence; she hated their behavior but was not able to do anything to save herself from their bullying except hiding herself in home and seeing them from the window. As an impact she had no friends of her age. The only best friend she has was her aunt, who is also hearing and speech impaired and was the only one with whom she can share her sadness through sign language.

She was born with lower body impairment and the left hand dis-functioning. But she learnt all the household chores and actively helps her mother. Even her engagement in doing household chore does not grab appreciation from others, but rather they look at her with the pity eyes. Not only they sympathize with her parents about the condition of their daughter saying how she is unable to manage herself, but they also blame their parents for pushing her to do the laborious household chores. Yet the household work did not make her suffer but people’s behavior pushing her to do nothing was grimmer. She was in need of encouragement but was receiving the opposite.

At the time, CHIP met with her, she was a very shy girl and used to hide herself in the blanket at the arrival of visitors at home. In first meeting with Rabia, she did not come to meet the CHIP team and the member from the community based organization. Her life started changing during her first meeting with CHIP team during their second visit to her house. With the help of community social mobilizer and CBO, Rabia got confidence and started talking with them during their visit to her home. Her confidence improved and she started taking part in community meeting and socializing with other members of community. The girl hiding her face in the blanket was now able to sit in the community meeting even in the absence of her mother. She started making friends of her age and now spend her leisure time with them talking and playing. CHIP also helped her in setting up a tuck shop in the village which is now the main source of income not only for herself but for her family as well. She spend most of her time in her business. Her family helps her in buying the stock for the shop at the end of every week. Shop is situated near the school and with her earning from her shop; she has now added new items including the stationary items for school. She is also planning to include the children lunch items e.g. Samosa and Pakora to increase her sale. Due to the improved family income, Rabia has now enrolled her younger sister to college and bears all her education expenses.

CHIP assisted her and helped her in receiving the special CNIC. She is motivated and has decided to enroll herself in the distance education programme to complete her intermediate exam. While sharing this dream she said: “I will complete my education and spread the knowledge with community member to bring change in people’s behavior to treat everyone equally”. She got engaged in 2018 and this is the major milestone in her life as her parents are very content and hopeful for a happy and bright future for their daughter and also they aim to continue supporting their daughter to achieve the life she deserves and dream.
My Security Guard
It was one of the hazy evening in the month of October, Zahra, a 47 years old women from village Malagroung in union council Dahoni Balgar of Distric Khaplu was working in the field to collect and store the fodder for her animal's sustenance for upcoming winter. She felt dizziness in the field but continued her routine responsibility even after returning from the field and served food to the family members and before going to bed sang a bedtime song for her youngest child “Shosho Shosho Youyou Youyou Nee Chespa busoi yang neutting”. She went to sleep and wake up with severe fever in the morning and pain in her lower body. The fever prolonged and she was unable to move her lower body. At this time Zahra was expecting her fourth child and had made preparations by knitting a new woolen sweater for the newborn with her hands in her leisure time.

Before this sudden illness, she was living a healthy and prosperous life with her small setup, where she was responsible for taking care of small piece of land and the animals for living, while her husband work as a laborer on daily wages in Khaplu. Things were going well in the family. But all of a sudden, due to Zahra's illness, the whole life scenario changed forever. All of the house responsibilities then shifted on the little shoulders of her eldest daughter, who was near to complete her third grade in school. She left the school to perform the household chores and to take care of her younger siblings. Zahra suffered her lower-body paralyzes for 18 years and remained dependent upon family members for movement. She hated the look of pity in the eyes of visitors for her situation and for her children. She was in dire need of encouragement and not sympathy but visitors and the people around usually do not understand it. With the passage of time, she managed to crawl within the house to lessen the difficulties of her children. But her both daughters could not complete their education due to zahra’s illness.

Due to the limited income, Zahra family was not able to afford the doctor in Skardu city for cure and rehab. After 10 years, one of the neighbor donated a plastic chair to Zahra, which she started using instead of crawling. She started movement with the help of chair and was able to move within the house but this affected her back posture as well. This was the entire condition, when CHIP found her during the collection of baseline information for rehabilitation and inclusion of PWDs in the village.

The CHIP team, with the help of physiotherapist visited Zahra for her medical assessment to assist her and to bring her back to normal life. Initially, it was difficult for Zahra to understand what differences a rehabilitative assistance could make in her life. She was provided with the walker which she use to move inside and outside of home as well as for movement in the village and social activities. She was also assisted with different sessions of physiotherapy and daily exercises to improve her body posture and mobility. With her improved mobility, she started taking interest in the activities of Green Welfare Organization (GWO) working for the inclusion and rehabilitation of PWDs and marginalized. She is now the member of GWO and actively participate in decision making and raising voice for the rights of PWDs. CHIP also assisted her in obtaining disability certificate and special CNIC

Zahra shared her happiness about her improved mobility with the team saying:

“The walker is like a security guard for me that helps me in moving and keeps me safe during mobility from one place to another”.
Drifting Away
the Dark Clouds of Loneliness
One year old Sajjad was playing with his wooden toys in the kitchen, where her mother was preparing the food for dinner. She went to the animals and fodder storage room for milking the cow but was not able to complete it as she heard the loud screams of her only child. Running back to the kitchen room, she got stunned seeing the little Sajjad struggling with the high flames of fire in rescuing his favorite wooden toy. Unfortunately, his one leg got burnt and he was half dead with the pain and struggle. The poor mother has to face all this in their poor economic situation. The local health doctor helped them in healing the burnt injury, but poor sajjad lost his foot as a result. Being the single child of his parents, he started school and was very good and dedicated student, and was highly motivated to complete the primary education. But misery and problems have seen their home. In his sixth grade he lost his mother and till reaching 9th grade he lost his father too. This added more difficulties with his exiting situation. The only relative from his father side was his uncle who moved to Karachi city with his family for better living and future of his children after one year of Sajjad's father death. Having no siblings he went into long isolation that converted into loneliness. He confined himself in four walls of his room without seeing the outside light and smelling the fresh air and had no interaction with the neighbors. Even if someone from the neighbor come and try to talk with him; he used to cover himself under the pillow. The economic situation was very poor having no source of income or any other asset in the form of land or animal as all were sold out after the death of his parents.

Sajjad's life took a new turn when CHIP visited Gomayar village Khaplu Bala in 2016. With the help of community, CHIP succeeded to mobilize a group of villagers to work for their own development with inclusion of disabled persons in development activities by ensuring their access to all basic facilities and necessities of life. During house to house visits, community mobilizer of CHIP found Sajaj and started conducting the counseling sessions with him. Having familiar with all the local norms and language the examples of successful persons with disabilities were shared with him. After a series of session, the mobilizer and the community became successful in bringing Sajaj out of his house. He started attending the community organization meeting. During the meeting he has started realizing that there are many other PWDs who cannot walk independently but they come to community organization meetings to discuss their problem. On getting impressed from his fellows, he became the member of the community organization and started taking interest in different activities of community organizations. He also became the member of Disabled People Organization (DPO) that is registered by the local PWDs.

CHIP assisted him in getting special CNIC that has helped him to enroll in intermediate through distance education programme of Allama Iqbal Open University. The fee per semester is around Rs. 2000 but due to special CNIC, he is now paying only Rs. 400 per semester.

For the medical assessment of Sajjad, the CHIP team with the help of physiotherapist visited him to bring him back to normal life. He was provided with the prosthetic leg for easy walking. With the assistive devices and increased interaction with community members during community meeting he became able to make new friends, successfully drifting away the loneliness clouds. He started taking interest in sports and theater shows intended for the massive community awareness for inclusion of persons with disabilities. During livelihood intervention for PWDs, CHIP helped him in setting up a tuck shop in the village which is now the main source of income for him. He is running his shop very successfully and the monthly income is around 10,000. He also got engaged and is preparing for his marriage in 2019 summer when the weather will be pleasant for the festive and celebration activities. He explained his joy when CHIP team pays a visit at his shop

“The summer of 2017 brought the shining sun for me. Now I have many friends with different age groups with whom I can spend happy time and participate with them in different sports activities. They come to my shop as well and after closing of shop I join them in different socialization activities”. He is very happy for all the interventions of community organization and CHIP for bringing positive change in his life.
The mighty fresh water falls of Kharfaq village catches your attention alongside the river sight with beautiful natural scenes and looks more beautiful during the arrival of autumn and spring seasons when valleys presents the splendid combination of different colors and ongoing field activities of villagers alongside the road. But during the winter season the heavy snow fall affect the inhabitants normal life by restricting their movement. and also had an effect on the transportation system of the area making it difficult for the vaccinator to reach the children for vaccination.

This poses even more challenges, when the vaccination teams confront parents with their belief system about vaccination that it causes unproductivity in the children. Fatima Bibi, thirteen months old was denied by her parents for vaccination. It was difficult to understand for Abdul Ghafoor (little Fatima’s father), as he used to think none of their family member got vaccinated before and all of them grown well, then why his daughter has to take vaccination and what good theses vaccination will do for her.

The community mobilizer of CHIP with the help of Lady Health worker organized sensitization sessions with Ghafoor and his family about the importance of vaccination and immunization. She explained to them the different names of vaccines and their timings, TT vaccination and various risks of un-immunization. With their efforts Fatima’s parents not only got convinced for vaccination but has now completed 6 doses of vaccines. Fatima’s mother has kept the vaccination card safe after learning the importance of vaccination for children health.
Leaving No One Behind
The 2030 sustainable development agenda has provided the platform for local, national and international disability movements to include the disabled persons in all Sustainable development interventions with the slogan “leaving no one behind”. Siachen Disability Forum (SDF) is the disability advocate group in the extreme north of District Khaplu where life remains frozen for more than half of a year.

The journey of SDF has started two years back when a group of disabled persons from district Ganche participated in an event being organized by CHIP on “International Day of Persons with Disabilities”. Representatives from Community Organizations, Government and Non-Government institutions and disabled persons from remote mountain areas were gathered to attend this event. Numerous Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) working at national level shared their journey and success stories with the participants of the event. As an impact, the people from district Ganche were highly influenced and sit together to discuss their interests and needs. They also started taking part in different training and events being organized by CHIP.

During their training they conducted different need assessment surveys in district Ghanche to map out the population and needs of persons with disabilities. Based on their findings and interests a rehabilitation plan for the district was developed with the assistance of CHIP team. And then came the day when they registered their DPO in September 2017 to work for the rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. CHIP facilitated DPO members in their strategic planning and in developing the three year sustainable work plan for the communities and also it strengthens the DPO to work as an independent sustainable organization. For the financial independence and sustainability, CHIP has assisted DPO in establishing a social enterprise to bear the administrative and management costs of the organization. The SDF members also got training on report and proposal writing with the help of CHIP to support their future interventions.

Currently, SDF is comprised of 23 members including twenty males and three females from different villages of District Ghanche. The executive body consists of seven members who are responsible for conducting different activities/event and to share the overall progress of organization with the members. The executive body and members are elected through election process which occurs every two years, with the aim to share the progress of the organization and lessons learnt. CHIP is also supporting SDF to develop different linkages at national and international level and its members are now actively engaged and are participating in various local and national level training and events.
Exploring My Hidden Potentials
This is the story of Hassan Ali, who used to wake up early in the morning to catch the bus for skardu in search of labor in the mountains, where he used to do the laborious work of stone cutting for a marble factory. The difficulty in walking has made his life challenging but there was no other alternative except to do the physical labor in order to meet the need of his family. Being the single child, all the burden of family responsibilities weighed heavily on his shoulders. After the death of his father, the condition became worse as he has to leave his home and his old mother alone at home to earn a livelihood. The total earning was around Rs 12000 in which he has to manage the rent of the room and the transportation cost to visit his mother every weekend besides meeting the basic necessities of life. All in all, they were living from hand to mouth. The situation gets even worse during long freezing winter time of the year, when he became unable to go in search of work due to the pain in his lower body and has to stay at home.

His life got changed when he met CHIP team during the sports gala event in the village, where all PWDs were gathered around and participated in different games with other members of community. He shared his problems, existing situation and difficulties due to the physical disability. CHIP helped him in his medical assessment and in getting the assistive devices. He also got physiotherapy sessions and exercises training to improve his body posture and to manage the physical pain. He was also assisted in getting the disability certificate and Khidmatgar card to support his financial position.

With help from CHIP and business management training sessions with CHIP, Hassan Ali started his small food shop on the road. This shop is now the key source of income for him. His financial and health situation got improved in less than six months of his shop establishment and as his shop was paying good amount for the living he has no need to go for labor work outside of the village. With time everyone in the neighborhood started realizing his worth and wished to marry their daughter with Hassan Ali. Hassan Ali got married and is very happy in his new life, where things got changed for him and brought peace and comfort in his life in a very short period of time, which he had never thought of.

He is now an active member of CBO and participates in all the events of CHIP and village. He has many friends from the village, CBO and even outside of the village owing to the location of his shop on the main road. Having good command on Urdu language he has also started working as a tour guide of his area during the tourist season. While explaining his happiness during the visit, he said;

"I did not know earlier that I have such hidden potentials and I have the ability to do so many things. I also got training on making assistive devices from local material e.g. Wood crutches, I am doing many different things along with my food shop. The farming activities of the area has benefited me a lot as my shop remains open for 24 hours during summer time and tourist season. Not only the tourists enjoys food from my shop but the truck drivers came for buying potatoes and other vegetables during summer months buys food from my shop and also provide the food not only to the tourists but also to the truck drivers who come. I also take part in different inter-village events and set my stall there as an impact I got food orders from other villages as well. People enjoy the taste of my food and place orders from far off places as well".

Hassan Ali is now an active member of the CBO and he not only participates in all the events but is playing an important role in mobilizing other members of the community as well. He feels lucky to get training on different aspect of his life which influences him to explore his different hidden abilities and potentials which he was unaware of.
Responding to the First Echo of My Life
Ashraf Hussain is a young man of 18 years, who lives with his family in Kharfaq village. He was born with hearing and speech impairment. He grew up in a large family of 16 members with sign language being the only source of communication among them. He could not continue his education due to the lack of special needs and inclusive school in the area. He managed and struggled hard to continue his education till fourth grade but his teachers did not allow him to get enrolled in higher classes. After leaving the school, life got difficult for Ashraf as he has to face the judging eyes and pointing figures of people due to dependence on his parents.

He had nothing to do and to spend his time while everyone around were busy making fun of him and his miseries. His age fellow used to call him with different names, make fun of him and tease him that he has no courage to come out of the house and to see his friends going school and playing.

His life took a turn when he first met with the CHIP team during the community meeting at CBO office. He got the opportunity to participate in different sports activity and became very happy to know that he was a very good player of football. He started taking interest in football and this helped him in getting back to the normal life. The encouragement he received made him able to communicate with others and to make new friends. Ashraf Hussain is now the active football player of his village team and is a source of proud for the team as well because of his 20 goals he shot made his team won the football tournament played between 11 CBO member teams. While expressing his feelings he said;

“The winning moment was the best moment of my life, seeing all the community members cheering for me and hugging me gave me immense amount of pleasure and happiness. Everyone greeted me that day and I was the central part of the village celebrations”.

This was just the beginning of the happy days. The actual happiness came his way when he got the medical assessment for hearing impairment and was provided with the hearing aid. When he first heard the echo in his ear he jumped out of shock and got terrified with the unusual sound that he was listening for the first time. The sessions with the doctors brought positive improvements, as he got used to the device and became able to manage the frequency of the device himself. During the speech therapy session by the community mobiliser his parents were also trained and were told not to speak with him in sign language as a result he has started speaking few words and his speech is improving day by day.

He also got three months training from a local carpenter and has started working as a carpenter in his village. And now he is capable of supporting his two children and earning livelihood for his family independently. CHIP also helped him in getting the disability certificate. He is not only an active member of CBO but also take part in different activities of DPO.
Civil Society Human and Institutional Development Programme (CHIP)