

First draft

Meeting the *katcha* women

By

Eftiqar Haider

(RDPI/ Indus Consortium)



“The floods ruined us utterly, but the RDPI gave us confidence to speak in front of males,” said a group of self-confident women at Goth Raees Chachar.

The village is located some 12 Km from the city of Gothaki inside the Katcha of Qadir Pur Union Council (UC) along the bank of Indus. The floods destroyed thousands of villages in rural Sindh. Raees Chachar is only one.

With houses razed to the ground, crops buried under thick bed of sands, livestock reduced to few, life in this remote village would have come to a halt save for its lively community equally led by women and children along with males. Prior to floods the village had 66 houses but none remains intact now. A Mosque and an Outaak, (Community Drawing Room), survived nevertheless.

“The RDPI comes here to ask us our needs. They have taken us into Committees e.g. Children Protection Committee. And we realized for the first time in our lives we too have voices that matter.”

“We don’t need anything. We only need to educate our children. Education is our only

need. It is our true jewelry that no flood can take away. Floods carried away our valuables leaving behind a lesson: material things are perishable, they can be destroyed, they can be drowned, they can be stolen away but education is imperishable that our children lack at present. Please help us educating our children.”

“Our males have become frightened since floods. They don’t dictate our lives now,” laughingly revealed one Sahib Khatoon, 45 when asked about attitude of males towards women in the village.

“When flood stuck our children became dumb. They would wander all day in the village. They would question us, what is the purpose of our lives. We had no answers.”

“Thanks to RDPI’s Child Friendly Centre (CFS) that washed away fear of floods from minds of our children. They laugh again, they play again and they are eager to learn. They come here often eating their breakfast hurriedly. They simply cannot wait. Look what they do here (pointing towards a sketch placed on a wall of CFS). It’s your responsibility to educate them”



“Our elders didn’t send us to schools. We are paying the price of their negligence. We wouldn’t allow history to repeat itself. We have told our males, we will educate our girls too. And they seems having no objections.”

“Do your children help you in fields and homes,” when asked all said yes. “How their joining the

schools will not over-burden you in homes, fields and kitchen,” to this the women of Katcha bluntly replied, “if your parents had taken it on themselves so can we.”

“We marry our girls at 15 mainly out of prevailing insecurity in the area and also because no school exist nearby for them to go. We don’t have a single primary pass girl around.”

As we intended to leave their place collectively they asked us a sudden question: “Can you please guide us how to increase gaps in children? She has nine, she has eight and she is pregnant again with her seventh. I have eleven children. And I’m tired.”



We promised sending them a qualified woman in the village answering these queries soon.

--Ends