

## INVESTMENT IN RIPE TIME

**A journey of development is a long haul. It applies to collectives as well as individuals. One of the pre-condition for development is to venture out on the journey. A small help at initial stage enables one to take strike and consequently giant leaps in life. This is a story about a farmer whose apple business was stunted because of lack of support for some basic requirements of business. However, a timely help proved instrumental in increasing the sale and stabilizing business.**

Muhammad Ali son of Abdul Ali is a resident of Village Aliabad, Union Council Bagicha, Tehsil Kharmang in District Skardu. There are 35 Households in village Aliabad and the mainstay of income is agriculture. Most of the people grow fruit trees in their land. Pari village produces apple in abundance. The famous 'Saspolo' apple is sold all over Baltistan and even to major stores in Pakistan. Because of its mellowness, the apple of Pari has become its identity and trademark of the area.

Ali started his work as an entrepreneur in 2007 by selling apple to commuters passing through his village, and in Skardu town. He had a selling outlet near the bridge of his village where people from other villages, passengers and the Army personnel purchased apple from him, yield him a good profit. Last year he sold 50 mounds of apple. But there were some problems also as Muhammad Ali had to purchase and collect apple from the upper villages because the apple he harvested in his land was not enough to cater to the demand. Also, during collection of apple, apples used to fall on ground due to traditional picking technique. There were hosts of other problems due to lack of cleanliness and storage.

One day he read an advertisement of AKRSP in newspaper which sought proposals from young entrepreneurs from Baltistan for a Youth Micro Challenge Awards under the EELY project. He developed a business proposal and submitted it to the Market Development section of EELY project. His proposal for apple house was approved and was granted an amount of Rs. 150,000. Through this award Muhammad Ali renovated his old shop and purchased a washer machine.

Now he is happy as EELY project helped him to purchase the washer for the apple. Now Ali can clean and process quality apple, thus he expects a hefty profit this time. At the moment he has 3 employees working at his shop and expects to collect and process high quality apple this season. He used to sell 50 mounds, after the installation of washer machine he expects to sell 70 Mounds of quality apple this season.

According to Muhammad Ali, "Entrepreneurship was his sole interest since childhood". He thinks that the intervention by EELY Project would help the young people of Baltistan as there is lack of financial resource providers for the entrepreneurs like himself. He thinks that there is huge potential in Baltistan region in terms of Business through introduction of local products like apple, apricot and dry fruit, and the step taken under the EELY Project Market Development Component is a stepping stone in this regard.