

Youth give new Perspectives to Old Problems

A salient feature of youth in a society is the enthusiasm that manifests in multifarious ways. In the changing socio-economic and cultural scenario of GBC, aspirations and needs of the youth are changing as well. This requires a new approach to positively harness the energies of youth for socio-economic development in the region. This is a story about a youth organization that has given embodiment to a dream of youth in a village in Hunza valley. The youth members of Shahi Khyber Youth and Students Organization (SKYSO), have mobilized local resources and seized the opportunity for youth development offered under EELY programme of AKRSP.

Shahi Khyber Youth and Students Organization (SKYSO) was established in the village Khyber of district Hunza-Nagar in 1987, with an objective to facilitate youth in general and students in particular in their social responsibilities and educational career respectively through a common platform. The village is situated some 187 km away from Gilgit city. A library was established in Khyber village in 1989, but it did not sustain. Over the years the youth of Khyber village felt the dire need of a space for students to develop book reading habits and get computer training. But to establish a quality institution proved to be expensive.

In October 2012, Shahi Khyber Youth and Students Organization (SKYSO) heard about Youth Micro Challenge Award (YMCA), a mini-project in the chain of EELY, through a member and submitted its innovative idea of establishment of Agha Abdul Samad Library and Resource Centre in Khyber village. The proposal of innovative idea met all the requirements which had been set by the management of Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. The organisation won the award reserved for district Hunza-Nagar.

In January 2013, a grant of 40,000 rupees was provided to Shahi Khyber Youth and Students Organization (SKYSO) for the establishment of Agha Abdul Samad Library and Resource Centre. The Youth Organization mobilized internal and external resources by using award as a seed grant. Different meetings were held to sort out the financial problems and to mobilize resources from other sources to make project successful. They approached Aga Khan Education Service's authorities for the allocation of vacant space of the school to be used for the purpose and succeeded to get it. Proposals had also been submitted to Hashoo Foundation, who donated 1500 books of different disciplines. Moreover, SKYSO's members also collected 230 books and novels for the library from individual contributions in the village.



At the same time financial resources were mobilized to furnish the library and resource center where skilled and unskilled volunteers contributed their time and services to accomplish the task in a very short span of time. In July 2013, a state of the art library was established in the village school. It has provided a centralized platform and educational resources for the students, youth and professionals to utilize their spare time in the village and a venue for youth to interact with the professionals. After the successful implementation of the creative idea, the Village Organizations approached SKYSO and offered to run the VOs. Now the organisation intends to implement another creative idea of “Sina”, under YMCA and aims to establish a sports complex to promote indoor and outdoor activities in future.

Now about 60 students come to the library on daily-basis due to which interaction between youth is increasing. Other than students general public also benefits from the library by borrowing books and reading in library. The award of YMCA provided the organization an opportunity to learn how to generate funds for its activities, thus enhance their leadership qualities. The Youth Organization appreciated the project of EELY and said, “EELY is a good initiative to activate and engage youth in positive activities.” In short, the establishment of library demonstrated the positive role of youth for a healthy society and community development, and fulfilled EELY’s main objective of engaging youth in constructive activities.

