

Instinctive Creativity Blossoms when Explored; Success story of Hazrat Bibi

■ Ambreen Jehan - Khwendo Kor, Karak Region

The small mud-built house and the grim face of Hazrat Bibi are reflective of the countless problems and uncertainties hovering over her life at an age of above 50 years. Poverty might have had a telling effect on her health, but not on her determination, which is the spectacular essence of her endeavors. The local women CBO identified her, during formal meetings with the Khwendo Kor (KK)-Partner NGO-staff, as a potential entrepreneur. As a good example for others, Hazrat Bibi started a nursery enterprise under clear Terms of Partnership in February 2003

with the support of her family members.

The initial support of KK, the Farm Forestry Support Project (FFSP) and the phenomenal creative instincts of Hazrat Bibi made her an enterprising woman. A resident

of a small village

Kanda Baji Khel of district Karak, poor and hardworking, she is managing her nursery quite efficiently within a short period of just one marketing season. She raised 4000 plants in her nursery during February 2003. She collected the initial preferences for species from the local farmers and raised different varieties of Keekar (*Acacia spp.*), Shisham (*Dalbergia sisso*), Bekain (*Melia spp.*) and Sanatha (*Dodonaea*); while the fruit plant included pomegranate, grapes, guava and ornamentals. KK and FFP staff gave her initial technical training in nursery raising

and management. She quickly learned the technical skills and was able to transfer this knowledge to other potential entrepreneurs in her locality. She has learnt techniques ranging from preparation of soil mixture, tube filling, proper placement of beds, sowing of different forest and fruit seeds as well as planting of cuttings, regular shifting of tubes, adequate fencing, weeding and other management activities. A simple shed like structure made up of local material has been installed to protect the plants from severe heat in summer and to do away with the frost damage during the winter.

Simultaneously, for marketing of the plants she linked herself with community members facilitated by a local women organization. Consequently, the local CBO women members bought some plants from her nursery for plantation at various sites in the village. Her son, who is actively supporting her, strove for outside sources to facilitate marketing of the plants. He has established an attractive "sales point" with a colorful banner at the main bazaar, where plants with tags are kept in fine wooden boxes right at the front of the shop. The entrepreneur took the idea of innovative marketing techniques during the enterprise trainings imparted to both male and female entrepreneurs. The tantalizing arrangement of the plants in the market captures the first glance of the buyers and they are prompted to buy these plants. Forest plants are sold at the rate of Rs.1-2 while the fruit plants are sold at the rate of Rs.15-20 per plant. A total of 2800 plants have been sold both at her own locality as well in the nearby market during the monsoon season and she



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has earned above Rs.4000. This amount, in a span of six months is reasonable for the widow to fulfill some of her wide range of needs. More importantly, she has also returned a significant percentage of the input cost to the Karak Regional office of the project.

The outcome of her efforts has given her an added impetus and now she has increased the size of her nursery to above 6000 plants so as to have more income from future marketing of the plants. This time she has procured other diverse and

rather expensive species of plants from external sources on her own, which manifests her keen interest in nursery business. The rather new enterprise is gradually transforming into a more sustainable and viable income-generating activity for Hazrat Bibi. This activity might not be a solution to all of her problems but it would certainly contribute towards improvement in her livelihood, as she would get an added income from a small piece of land.

