

Empowering the Disempowered

“It is just a matter of one year, if I look back, last year on the same date I was in a miserable condition. There were heaps of problems and I was at a loss what to do? Today life is quite changed only because of the PRSP.”

It was how Rubina, the resident of Chak 367 JB Gojra, District Toba Tek Singh, started telling her story while we were sitting in her beauty parlour. She is married to a man who is a driver by profession and is mother of three, two girls and a boy.

A year ago, she was living with her parents in Chak 367JB because her husband was not working and her in laws threw her out with her kids saying it is not their responsibility to bear her expenses. Even when she was staying with them, they were used to blame her for the plight of their son who was once working in Austria and was forced to come back due to some unavoidable circumstances there.

Now, being at her parents’ home, it was a big question mark for her what to do to bear the expenses of herself and her children. Her children were of school going age and she had nothing in hand to send them to school. Her parents were not that well off to support her.

It was just the time, PRSP staff started organizing the women of the village and the Community Organization (CO) ‘Malika’ was formed in May 2006. She joined the CO. During the meetings she learnt about the trainings programme of PRSP and discussed with the Social Organizer (SO) that what kind of training she can take to earn some reasonable amount. It was the training course of the beauticians that appealed her and she requested for that. Her parents encouraged her and she joined the programme. She was used to go to the PRSP District Office daily and got the training with 13 other women. It was a month long training and the trainer, who was from vocational training institute Gojra, tried to equip them with all the skills they could need to compete in the market. According to Rubina:

“It was not just a skill that I got during this month but also gained the self confidence and the courage that changed my life to what it is now.”

It was not a period of smooth sailing for her as her in laws disliked this idea of her getting this training. They said that it will be a social embarrassment for them if their daughter in law does this kind of work. She was also threatened that if she will not stop this activity, she will be divorced. But she got a lot of support from her parents at this point and she kept going.

During the month of the training, she discussed with the trainer and the SO that she wants to establish her own parlour and they worked out the cost jointly. The money was again an issue but not that big this time as PRSP was there. She applied for the credit from the platform of her CO and got it. Her trainer helped her in buying the quality products on the subsidized rates.

She rented a shop in the outskirts of Gojra City, off main road for Rs. 2000/- per month (Rent Rs. 1500 + Rs. 500 Utilities) and established her small beauty parlour in October 2006.

There was no other parlour in this area. Previously, the women were used to go to the town and now her good reputation and suitable location attracted most of them. Her business was flourishing.

She admitted her children in a school that is very close to her work place and is considered to be a good school. The whole family were used to come to the place on Rikshaw and it cost her Rs. 2000/- per month and she had to close the parlour early evening to reach home. She decided to shift in the extra room at the back of her parlour that will save her travel cost and will also enable her to work till late in the evening.



Now the life is quite changed. Her net monthly income is around Rs. 5000/- to 6000/- (after paying rent of Rs. 2000/-; the cost of material around Rs. 3000/-; credit instalment of Rs. 926/- every month). She charges Rs. 3500/- for the bridal makeup. She is popular amongst her customers and her work is expanding. To further increase her income, she has started providing training and offers a three month course and charges Rs.5000/-. At the moment she has two trainees who also assist her in managing her ever increasing number of customers. She is adding facilities gradually in her parlour like Tread Mill etc.



She is happy and even more motivated and confident now. She attends CO meetings every month in her village and has become a symbol of development and change among the women of her village. For this, she is thankful to PRSP.

In addition to all these developments, her husband has started working as a driver and trying for the re-unification of the family. When she was asked for her opinion in this regard, she said smilingly, she also wishes so as she hopes he will behave now.