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Karachi

Monday, December 06, 2010

Traditional Community to Avail Modern Farming Methods

Mai Khairan, 45, gets up early in the morning and begins running a two-stone grain grinder, a traditional tool for grinding grains into flour. Belonging to Padhario Village, located at a sand dune in Achhro Thar, Khairan takes care of her family, children and calves. The use of this old tool for grinding grains is still more common for the people living in the sand dunes of Achhro Thar. It is suitable for the small scale production of flour which the desert families use on daily basis.

Like Khairan, all the desert women use the same traditional tool for grinding grains. Some well-off people who have vehicles or camels travel to nearby towns for grinding grains, while majority of the people feel comfortable to use this old tool for making flour.

The people of Achhoro Thar (White desert) still seem to be living in Middle ages, using old tools for hunting, eating and cooking, playing and healing ailments, because neither schools nor health facilities are there. However, depleting natural resources have disturbed their natural way of life yet they are reluctant to shift to other areas. The authorities concerned have never taken initiative in terms of opening schools, ensuring teachers' availability, setting up health facilities and providing people access to nearby towns for communication and marketing of their natural products.

Majeed Mangrio, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF), said all these people have traditional way of living life, enjoying liberty by living close to the nature and using old tools.

As far as their intervention is concerned, he said, they have identified five villages for introducing pitcher farming under the project, using water from deep wells ensuring the community participation. The beneficiary people prefer to grow seasonal vegetables and fruit orchards in the vicinity. People traditionally rely on seasonally growing natural fruits, water vegetables in the ponds and dairy products such as milk, meat and butter.

Nasir Panhwar, Coordinator Indus for All Programme while giving his assessment about the pitcher irrigation project said it is cost-effective as well fulfilling the nutritional need of local communities. He said since the community itself owns the project they are enjoying seasonal vegetables and may sustain it further.

“We have imparted trainings about the project initiative (pitcher irrigation) and now it is the community's responsibility to grow vegetables for themselves,” Panhwar said, adding that it needs nothing but community's ownership.

The people under this project have also initiated a plan to protect parts of grazing fields by fencing during the

monsoon rains and use the same for their animals fodder in the winter.

The major demand of the people is to recognise the rights of local communities to natural resources, grazing fields, lands and scattered ponds so they may enjoy the life with traditional dignity.

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