GRASP • PAKISTAN
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress
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GRASP inception report approved by the European Union Delegation

GRASP inception report has been approved by the European Union Delegation, a monumental step in the progress of the project.

The report details GRASP interventions, which will focus only on selected value chains and districts to create a critical mass and generate measurable results. This approach will allow for an efficient and realistic allocation of project resources, while setting objectives and feasible targets to help GRASP achieve its overarching goals of poverty alleviation, supporting agribusiness and SME development, supporting gender-inclusive incomes and leveraging climate-smart production practices.

The inception report aims to deliver an agreed, coherent and detailed work plan for GRASP, which will determine the direction of work for the entirety of the project by detailing key priority interventions to be carried out through GRASP’s outputs and activities. The report will be made available online on the GRASP webpage on ITC website in coming days.

GRASP Coordinator meets with Provincial Steering Committee Chair (PSC)

During his visit to Sindh, GRASP coordinator Mr. Azher Ali Choudhry along with provincial representative Ms. Shabnam Baloch met with Chairman Planning and Development Board Mr. Muhammad Waseem, who also serves as the chair for GRASP Provincial Steering Committee, Sindh.

Mr. Muhammad Waseem expressed interest and ownership for GRASP and assured his full cooperation to the provincial team for smooth implementation and strategic support to achieve its goals. They discussed project implementation, and how the team is already engaged with Deputy Commissioners in select districts, and other stakeholders at operational level to ensure alignment of activities with program outputs.

GRASP Coordinator shared that the Inception Report and annual work plan is now officially approved by EUD, and they agreed that the PSC meeting for Sindh will be convened in the near future. An invitation to GRASP launch was also extended to the Chairman. They looked forward to mutual cooperation and collaboration for the success of the project.

Public private dialogue mechanism for regulatory reform institutionalized in Balochistan

With the technical assistance of the International Trade Centre (ITC), under the European Union funded Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) project, the Planning and Development Department notified the constitution of Balochistan Regulatory Reform Committee (BRRC) on 8 September, 2020.

Government of Balochistan institutionalized this public private dialogue mechanism to serve as a platform for inter-Departmental coordination and policy dialogue for coherent, inclusive, and research based development, as well as implementation of laws, regulations, and policies in the province.

BRRC comprises of members from key provincial government departments, private sector organizations, and academia to collaboratively review existing laws, develop new laws, and design policies to augment economic growth and prosperity in the province. It is a significant step for
policy coherence, and the platform will be used to address common challenges in the area of policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Conducive regulatory regime and effective implementation of policies are imperative for the growth and sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which GRASP seeks to achieve through reforming business environment.

The newly constituted BRRC is mandated to orient the work of GRASP, and advance policy dialogue among public sector, private sector and academia to take a holistic view of the regulatory environment and build consensus among the stakeholders.

**Findings of COVID-19 impact on SME’s in Balochistan**

GRASP Balochistan team organized a workshop to discuss the findings of COVID-19 impact on small and medium enterprises in the province. The findings were generated from a survey by GRASP project which helped identify the challenges and needs of agribusinesses and farmers working in the horticulture and livestock sectors.

The event brought together members of the government, private sector, farmers, development partners, and academia to discuss the results and way forward. Value chain studies on selected products, gathered during the inception of the project were also presented to the participants.

DG Agriculture Extension Mr. Masoud Baloch, Deputy Secretary Food Department Mr. Shakeel Ahmed, Provincial Chief SMEDA and Mr. Zulfqar Durrani Head of UNDP Balochistan were also in attendance, and lauded the work of GRASP in uplifting the environment for SME’s in the province. The importance of bringing together key stakeholders and decision makers was highlighted by the speakers, who ensured their support to GRASP, as the project implements its activities in select districts of Balochistan after a successful inception period. Mr. Atta Ur Rehman, Acting Provincial Lead GRASP briefed the participants on ITC and GRASP project activities in context of COVID-19. The participants gave feedback and interacted with the presenters on the findings during a Q&A session towards the end.

**GRASP team comes together to discuss implementation**

GRASP National Coordinator, Azher Ali Choudhry travelled to Karachi where he met with the provincial team leads and SME advisors from Sindh and Balochistan. He also met with stakeholders from the public and private sector, where he strengthened ties with the key influencers, and exchanged information on way forward for GRASP as activities unfold in project selected districts.

GRASP teams from Sindh and Balochistan briefed him on the current situation of small and medium enterprise as well as small holder farmers in their provinces, as they struggle to cope with the after effects of an economic lockdown triggered by the Corona Pandemic. They explained to him the relief efforts the teams had organized in collaboration with local organizations, which included awareness sessions, awareness campaigns, and capacity building of local institutions on strengthening the sector.

The team discussed the importance of coherence and consistence between the similar activities of Sindh and Balochistan, which required mutual understanding and translation of output and sub-outputs to small activities. Therefore a one-week workshop in Islamabad was proposed, where the GRASP team would build understanding, and translate work plan outputs to detailed step wise activities. The workshop will take place from October 12 till 16 in Islamabad.

The coordinator also met with GRASP implementing partner in Sindh, Research and Development Foundation, where the CEO explained GRASP-COVID response targets under their agreed contract. They visited project areas in Thatta, and looked at the plans for establishing project offices in Thatta at Makli and Khairpur city for close liaison with communities, markets, and district authorities.
News in brief

Awareness campaign in full swing

As COVID-19 cases surge countrywide, it is vital to convey the right information on social distancing to the most rural communities in Pakistan. GRASP teams in Sindh and Balochistan have been disseminating awareness material in small shopping centers, livestock markets, and vegetable markets in select districts across the provinces. The visual content is translated into regional languages, with pictorial instructions to reiterate best practices while maintaining social distance!

Team visits Dates wholesale market

Developing value chains among select products is a strong component of GRASP. The team has been improving small enterprises and farmers’ business models by researching products and the market. GRASP Sindh team visited dates wholesale market in Khairpur Mir, Sindh. They also met with the members of the market association, and discussed the challenges they face, and what interventions would best support them.

Meeting with Chief Secretary, Sindh

GRASP Coordinator, Azher Ali Choudhry met with Chief Secretary Sindh Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah, where he briefed him on the objectives, scope and strategy of GRASP. The Chief Secretary showed deep interest in the project, and assured maximum support. GRASP strives to bring together the public and private sector to uplift the environment for SME’s in Sindh and Balochistan.

Strengthening ties with the public sector

GRASP actively engages public and private sector while moving ahead with implementing activities to uplift SME’s in Sindh and Balochistan. Provincial lead for GRASP in Sindh met with Secretary Livestock and fisheries department of Sindh. They discussed project progress made in Sindh, and avenues of collaboration.
Session on government of Pakistan finance schemes for SMEs

Raising awareness around government finance schemes is vital for small and medium enterprises to cope and grow during uncertain times brought on by the Corona pandemic. Around fifty representatives from various business associations, chamber of commerce and industries Quetta, farmers, and women entrepreneurs attended an awareness session on Government of Pakistan finance schemes. They were briefed by the officials of State Bank of Pakistan on the available financing opportunities and national financial literacy program.

The event was organized by GRASP team in Balochistan in collaboration with Taraqee Foundation, who have been at the forefront in assisting the government reach out to smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs with key information through media campaigns, visual information, and awareness sessions.

Meeting with Deputy Commissioner Nushki

Balochista team travelled to Nushki tand met with Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner Nushki on 17 September 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to brief him about GRASP and its activities to be implemented in Nushki, and to inquire about the challenges faced in agriculture and livestock sector in the district. It was decided in meeting that the GRASP team will organize awareness raising sessions on corona in end of October 2020.

Workshop to develop SME assessment tools in Sindh

Research and Development Foundation in collaboration with GRASP conducted a consultative workshop with SMEs and business support organizations amidst COVID-19, in Hyderabad on 17 September, 2020.

The workshop was conducted with stakeholders to seek their expert-input on the impacts of COVID19 on Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and Business Support Organizations. The objectives of the workshop were to seek expert input on the effects of COVID-19 on productivity and market access of small and medium producers in livestock and horticulture commodities value chains in Thatta, Hyderabad and Jamshoro (Kotri). It was also to use expert-input in the designing of SME assessment tools for livestock and horticulture commodities value chains; namely, goats and buffaloes and tomato, onion, banana and mango, respectively.

Our partners

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

PPAF participated in weekly coordination meetings with provincial teams. Union council selection criteria was developed and finalized for implementation of the COVID-19 work plan by FAO. PPAF played an integral part in developing the UC selection criteria with FAO and PMU members.

As the GRASP MIS is complete and ready for use by partners, PPAF requested the provincial teams and FAO to share the COVID-19 work plan data with them for analysis and entry in MIS to which FAO and provincial teams have agreed.