Public private dialogue to review the findings and recommendations of the research on institutional response to the Pandemic

In less than a year, the Covid-19 pandemic has already put at risk the health and livelihoods of millions across the globe. In Pakistan, large sections of both the policymakers and the public believes that the impact of the disease on livelihoods is far worse than its impact on public health.

A virtual public private dialogue was held to analyze the regulatory and institutional response by the federal and provincial governments of Sindh and Balochistan during Covid-19, and to help augment emergency response to revive rural economy.

The study, being conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute was presented in its initial stages to stakeholders for review. The event brought together key influencers and policy makers, who participated in a meaningful debate on the institutional, regulatory, and government response, and how the rural economy could be assisted to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Executive Director SDPI, presented the findings of the study to the participants, where he stated that through better utilization of budgets already allocated for Covid-19 response, targeting micro and small farms in both formal and informal sector, targeted and effective interventions could be implemented during future Covid-19 rounds.

GRASP has been adapted in response to the pandemic, and a Covid-19 emergency response work plan is being implemented. Through impact surveys, awareness campaigns, and policy dialogues the project has been working to improve MSME’s in Sindh and Balochistan.

“Increasing connectivity, improving primary data collection in rural areas, fine-tuning communication and coordination across government NGOs and donors in the field and better understanding and addressing the differential impacts on women were some of the areas that both the public and private sector can focus on together.”

Robert Skidmore, Chief of Sector Enterprise Development ITC

“Financing needs of the agriculture sector needed to be assessed and expedited, and GRASP will continue its work to uplift small and medium enterprise in Sindh and Balochistan through interventions on the ground, and policy recommendations.”

Azher Ali Choudry, GRASP Coordinator

“Research and discussions such as these are at the heart of GRASP in order to come up with more inclusive solutions to policy issues. Countering an unprecedented situation, such as COVID-19, requires public and private stakeholders to work together to align development efforts and emergency response strategies to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. There is a particular need to support SME’s which are critical for economic growth – particularly in these challenging times.”

Ovidiu MIC, Head of Cooperation EUD
Taraqee Foundation identified as implementing partner for COVID-19 response activities Balochistan

Taraqee Foundation (TF), a nonprofit organization providing need based services to marginalized communities in Balochistan has been identified as a partner organization for the implementation of the COVID-19 response work.

As GRASP Balochistan team initiates activities geared to assist SME’s and farmers in Balochistan affected by the pandemic, Taraqee Foundation will partner in carrying them out in districts Quetta, Pishin and Nushki. The activities are planned to support MSMEs, Market Committees and CSOs through awareness raising, capacity building programs, and endorsing market safety and hygiene.

In this regards, the GRASP team held an orientation session with the team at Taraqee Foundation and briefed them on the work plan and targets. TF will be working closely with the district administrations to implement GRASP activities over the next couple of months.

Meeting with Goth Seengar Foundation (GSF) Sukkur

Committed to establishing sustainable working relations with organizations on the ground, GRASP Sindh team met with the Goth Seengar Foundation in Sukkur. GSF’s main work is around agriculture, and has established Farmers Networks in Khairpur, Sukkur and surrounding districts. Women groups formed for kitchen gardening, particularly those growing tomatoes and onions, are doing promising work as the produce they grow in their homes not only sustains their families, but the surplus is also sold in the markets, bringing in extra revenue. GCF plans to organize a network of 40 villages to collect the products and help the farmers in setting up a dedicated shop in major vegetable markets. As the organization strives to connect the farmers with the markets, GRASP team identified areas of intervention where collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

District Commissioner Kahirpur endorses GRASP

GRASP Sindh team met with the District Commissioner, Khairpur Mr. Ahmed Ali Qureshi, introducing the project and its areas of interventions, working methodology, stakeholders, and areas of interest. The district commissioner offered his support and possible collaborations in the implementation of activities. They mutually endorsed the idea of organizing meetings between stakeholders, farmers, and growers under his auspices in Kahirpur. GRASP approach of public private partnership was endorsed, which will ensure sustainability of the interventions. Khairpur is one of the districts identified for immediate response for Covid-19 emergency work plan, where GRASP has planned a widespread awareness campaign in the district of informing the small markets, farmers, and MSME’s on safe practices for carrying out business activities as businesses reopen, but the threat of the virus spread still looms.

“GRASP delivered posters as part of Covid-19 awareness campaign, on social distancing and safe practices being set up at Thatta Livestock and Agriculture Department”.

“GRASP provincial lead for Sindh meeting with Secretary livestock and fisheries, where they discussed future collaboration on activities aimed at uplifting the SME’s in the province.”
News in brief

Balochistan

GRASP is working on upgradation of Balochistan Agriculture Marketing Information System (BAMIS) in Balochistan. In this regard, Ms. Saman Bakhtawar, SME Specialist had meeting with Mr. Masoud Baloch, Director General Agriculture (extension) on 7th August 2020. They discussed the existing BAMIS, the loopholes in the system, and how it could be improved. In addition, a meeting was also held with Ms. Durre-Seemi – Director Agriculture (Women Division) and her team. They were introduced to GRASP, its activities and goals. Her team also gave an orientation on various trainings provided by the department such as kitchen gardening, preparing pickles and jams etc. Possible avenues of collaboration were discussed.

SME Specialist Mr. Atta ur Rehman participated in United Nation Provincial Team meeting held on 16 August 2020 in Quetta. United Nations Resident Coordinator Mr. Julien Harneis was given activity updates along with the other UN agencies operating in Balochistan.

The team also met with Mr. Daud Bazai - Director General Small Industries. The team briefed DG and his team on GRASP mandate and deliverables, after which the DG requested for support in making the commerce wing functional. He also asked for assistance in developing a dynamic website for their directorate, and exposure visits for the department to learn from economies that showed exemplary growth in small industrial sectors.

The Secretary livestock met and appreciated GRASP team efforts in Balochistan and vowed to work together for development of livestock sector in Balochistan. ITC will hire an expert to conduct thorough feasibility studies on Milk and Meat cities in Quetta and Pishin on the request of livestock department.

Sindh

The GRASP Sindh team, after several successful discussions with the Sindh Food Authority (SFA) has arrived at an agreement on institutional capacity building of the Authority by assisting in areas of 1. Overall institutional Assessment and 2. Building capacity of the staff on food safety standards and compliance monitoring etc.

A meeting was held with the Project Director of KSEZ in Khairpur to seek possible collaboration opportunities. It was also to gage the scope, capacity, management and services etc. for the industrial sector in the region. The possibility of a joint facilitation center at KSEZ was discussed, which would provide skill development and training to youth, especially women in the region.

A meeting was held with the CEO of Sindh Rural Support Organization and his team at SRSO complex Sukkur. SRSO is a renowned rural support program network organization with vast experience in Sindh and has developed and maintained huge social capital in the province by mobilizing and facilitating local communities in areas of social mobilization, poverty reduction, wash, health, micro-enterprise development, livestock, women empowerment, and youth development etc. Possible avenues of collaboration in the areas of women livestock and horticulture groups, rural mobilization, and access to finance and access to market were discussed.

Our partners

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

Coordination meetings held with the provincial teams of Sindh where Union Council selection criteria for C-19 was drafted by ITS, PPAF, and FAO teams together. Clusters of the districts were drafted, and rationale for the clustering was provided.

PPAF also finalized and submitted the outputs related to M&E, access to finance, and the MIS as part of the inception MoU to ITC.