

**Research & Training Wing
Planning & Development Department
Government of Sindh**



**RESEARCH
HIGHLIGHTS
2018-19**

'A Year in Review'

FOREWORD

With the aim of creating a holistic amalgamation of its research portfolio after its revitalization and restructuring in 2018-19, the Research & Training Wing has initiated a series of 'Research Highlights'. This publication delineates the key research undertaken by the Wing during 2018-19.

The Research Highlights comprise the research that culminated in reports and was subsequently published on the Research & Training Wing's website. The Wing provided analytical support to the P&D Department on the 'Impact Assessment of the Union Council-Based Poverty Reduction Program (4 districts)', 'Technical Working Group on Optima Nutrition', World Bank's Study on 'Pakistan's Healthcare Private Sector Assessment', 'Review of the Global Gender Gap Report 2018', and Validation of the 'Health Profile' of the Sindh Bureau of Statistics.

The in-house research reports developed by the Wing during 2018-19 were the following:

- **Realizing the Potential of Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) for Improving Health Outcomes in Sindh**
The report focuses on the potential of ICTs to improve health outcomes in Sindh which can be replicated for innovative solutions across sectors.
- **Poverty Reduction Strategy in Pakistan: Deconstructing the Poverty Paradigm**
The report is centered on analyzing the pro-poor initiatives and social safety nets in the country and how they have evolved. The recommendations to address urban and rural poverty in the province of Sindh are proposed.
- **A Case for New Entrepreneurship Policy for Sindh**
This report builds upon the motif of the Sindh Labor Policy 2018 to recommend key policy prescriptions to foster entrepreneurship in the province.
- **Social Protection Strategy for Sindh: Lessons from the Global Experiences**
This report aims to draw upon lessons from social protection strategies globally that can inform the strategy in Sindh for effective social protection systems.

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**REALIZING THE POTENTIAL
OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS
TECHNOLOGY (ICTs) FOR
IMPROVING HEALTH
OUTCOMES IN SINDH**

Introduction

The role of information and communications technology (ICTs) is becoming increasingly important for the development in the modern world. Leveraging technological solutions for socio-economic development in developing countries can yield exponential gains in terms of improved outcomes. Government of Sindh can incorporate the successful ingredients from national and international best practices in the realm of ICTs to catalyze the socio-economic development of the province. This report will focus on the potential of ICTs to improve health outcomes in Sindh which can be replicated for innovative solutions across sectors.

Background

The instrumental role of ICTs cannot be overemphasized when it comes to achieving the socio-economic development goals of a country. Global consensus on the **Sustainable Development Goals** has renewed focus on the role of ICTs to facilitate designing and implementing evidence-based initiatives. In a world with about **5.1 billion unique mobile phone users and 4.4 billion internet users** around the world, ICTs can be utilized in generating data points for cross-sectional, longitudinal studies and much more to inform decision makers. The scope of ICTs in helping achieve SDGs is unimaginable. With limitless opportunities associated with communications technology, this report will restrict focus to employing ICTs to improve health outcomes in the context of Sindh.

Implementation of ICT-based platforms in low-resource settings presents novel challenges that need cost-effective solutions. Mobile phones are often viewed as useful instruments to improve health outcomes through enhanced accessibility, outreach and efficiency of provided services. Employing cellular phones in the health sector is often categorized under the umbrella of Mobile Health/m-Health

Global Examples

There are numerous examples of ICTs being used in the healthcare sector to improve efficiency, outreach and accessibility through m-Health, **e-Health** and **Electronic Platforms**. However, one must bear in mind that m-Health and e-Health tools cannot provide standalone sustainable health solutions. A more comprehensive policy framework requires cross-sector collaboration to have a far-reaching impact on the overall well-being of individuals and communities. The essence of SDGs lies in the inter-connectedness of the goals and targets. Aiming for lasting effects on the health of a community necessitates a concerted multi-disciplinary approach.

According to one **WHO report**, the most prevalent use of m-Health is in the categories of health call centers, emergency telephone services and telemedicine globally. The associated initiatives range from screening patients for disaggregated data, monitoring, treatment compliance and surveillance to health education, mobile money, emergency response and feeding real-time data to electronic platforms. There is limited evidence of the impact of ICTs on health outcomes over time due to a lack of longitudinal studies but cross-sectional data reveals improvement in immediate outputs. SMS Reminders have been shown to improve treatment compliance of **HIV-infected adults** and **health workers' adherence to malaria treatment guidelines** in Kenya. HP and **mPedigree** started an initiative that allows patients to check the authenticity of medicines, a common challenge, with the use of basic cell phones in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Another example, **mTrac**, is used in Uganda to track disease outbreaks and keep stock of medicines through a network of community health workers and health facilities. These examples illustrate the effectiveness of ICTs in improving health outcomes within resource-constrained settings. Sustainable change warrants technological initiatives to be coupled with dynamic complementary policies.

National Examples

In Pakistan, both the public and private health sector has a long way to go in terms of embracing the ICTs to address the socio-economic challenges. In the private sector, a handful of hospitals have the Electronic Medical Records System to document the patients' records of visits. In public sector health facilities, the practice of **basic electronic record-keeping is mostly missing**. At the government level, **District Health Information System (DHIS)** is present as an electronic repository of public health facilities, but at an infancy stage. Few **digital healthcare start-ups** are present in Pakistan that are mostly grounded in providing medicinal drugs or access to remote doctors to patients, but their scope is limited in terms of both services and geography.

A pivotal shift is required to harness ICTs for m-Health and e-Health solutions for the population at institutional level. **Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB)** can provide an imitable frame of reference in terms of realizing the potential of ICTs to improve health outcomes in Sindh. PITB has rolled out multiple **ICT interventions in the realm of health** that range from disease surveillance, dengue tracking, vaccinators tracking to drug inspection, medicine procurement, electronic medical records and hospital information management system. PITB has rolled out a tech incubator, **Plan 9** to incentivize innovations from start-ups for scalable solutions. Furthermore, PITB has also developed **Punjab IT Policy 2018** to serve as a roadmap for scaling IT innovations across different sectors of the province.

Way Forward for the Government of Sindh

From the perspective of Government of Sindh, the roadmap for ICT-driven solutions, pertaining to health and overall socio-economic development, should not be restricted to one-off interventions but should be embedded in an eco-system that connects the citizens to services and vice versa. GoS is cognizant of the importance of ICTs as they have engaged PITB for **automation of Sindh Police** systems that include human resource management information system, complaint management system, tenant registration system and facilitation centers. Sindh Government has also established a Sindh Public Service Delivery Cell for redressal of complaints received from the **Pakistan Citizen's Portal** initiated by Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. Citizen engagement should be the core tenet for the government in utilizing ICT solutions for continuous improvement in service delivery.

Within the realm of health, Sindh government has a few initiatives that include District Health Information System, Digital Immunization Registry, Hospital Management Information System & Electronic Medical Records under Public- Private Partnership and others. Although the aforementioned ICT initiatives are laudable, an integrated digital platform at government level can go a long way in terms of institutionalization of ICT for development solutions for the province.

There are numerous potential avenues for improving health outcomes with innovations in ICT. For example, a simple short-message service (SMS) using automated systems can be used to remind the patient of their next scheduled visit to the health facility or to ensure treatment compliance. These messages can also be utilized to convey health awareness information across different themes as a behavior modification tool.

For improved outreach in remote areas with a lack of trained doctors and health personnel, the Tele-Health services can be effectively utilized for outreach of services using video consultations. Electronic reports of patient's vital statistics can be shared with specialists for treatment prescriptions. The role of telehealth and telemedicine can be instrumental in developing a network of health care professionals who can provide critical advice that can be life-saving for people living in remote areas with little or no access to quality healthcare services.

From the Government's point of view, rigorous monitoring and evaluation tools must be available for proactive actions by decision-makers at the district level to avoid epidemics. This needs to include private health facilities too to ensure a dynamic surveillance system is in place for early detection of outbreaks and preventive measures may be taken to curb transmission in the community. The tools may be integrated in an electronic dashboard that can help generate useful data analytics to help the competent authority in making evidence-based decisions to improve healthcare service delivery.

From a strategic standpoint, the role of Optimization Software can yield effective results that can equip the policymakers with the requisite tools for optimal resource allocation for the existing health programs and interventions. For example, the resources may be currently allocated for different interventions in nutrition on an ad-hoc basis. For allocative efficiency, the optimization tool can be used for resources to be optimally allocated across interventions such as vitamin supplementation, infant and young child feeding education, treatment programs, food fortification and other interventions. The optimization software incorporates significant predictors for optimal resource allocation for quantifiable targets in terms of reduction in the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition.

Healthcare Tech Start-ups can also be incentivized to design and share scalable solutions to address the healthcare challenges facing the province of Sindh. PITB's tech incubator Plan 9 can be used as a frame of reference for designing a comprehensive interactive technical working groups to formalize public sector partnerships with academia, entrepreneurs, start-ups, healthcare experts and other relevant stakeholders. **National Incubation Center** in Karachi can serve as a starting point to forge linkages between the Government and Entrepreneurs that can translate into institutional arrangements for long-term collaboration.

With the recently developed **Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence and Computing** Headquarters in Karachi, the time is ripe to introduce predictive analytics and machine learning into the health technological landscape. Predictive analytics and machine learning concepts can be incorporated into the public sector's electronic platforms to design evidence-based interventions and programs that can catalyze improve health service delivery and outcomes. A stylized example can be to incorporate significant predictors using machine learning in the program to predict the likelihood of an incoming patient dropping out of an immunization program or not adhering to treatment prescriptions. The significant predictors can be captured by the healthcare provider at the facility to identify 'high-risk' patients to better target these individuals with proactive targeted behavior change interventions.

Monitoring and Evaluation Cell of the Planning and Development Department in Sindh has developed an Annual Development Plan (ADP) Progress Monitoring Dashboard to track and monitor the progress of the Development Schemes with electronic physical and financial monitoring reports. Such initiatives can be effectively utilized by the Government to make evidence-based decisions that foster the growth and development of Sindh. However, disintegrated and sporadic efforts might not serve the purpose of leveraging ICTs for improved service delivery and socio-economic outcomes. A good starting point is to devise a comprehensive Sindh IT Policy to develop a roadmap with a phase-wise approach prioritizing an integrated approach to ICTs across sectors with the ultimate goal of improving service delivery for the betterment of the population of Sindh.

Conclusion

Multi-pronged approach, that fosters collaborative efforts across sectors, may be the active ingredient in achieving the SDGs by 2030. Health of an individual is determined by various micro and macro level factors such as the socio-economic status, educational level, health systems, health coverage, inter-institutional linkages and macro-economic policies of the government. ICTs should not be viewed only as a tool for facilitating procedures, but a portal which provides an avenue for meaningful partnerships that translate into sustainable developmental solutions.

An uncharted territory in the realm of health-related ICTs is developing a broad-based system of linkages across sectors. One illustrative example is the crucial linkage between the financial and health sector. A meaningful collaboration between the financial and health institutions can translate into a tangible solution to address the demand-side budget constraints that prevent vulnerable populations from following through on health care activities and services. The underlying rationale is to incentivize intended health seeking and utilization behavior through conditional cash or credit transfers and ICTs can prove to be a crucial tool in providing an integrated platform to be used by both sectors.

A unified framework that links credit payments to healthy behaviors in low- resource settings can act as a way forward for improving health outcomes in the long-term through enhancement of capabilities. Tying credit eligibility to better health seeking and providing behaviors through ICTs can be used a social protection scheme. Different tiers of compliance can be linked to different sets of incentives. For example, small cash amounts can be paid to the parents for getting a child immunized for the first time. For timely immunizations, the household becomes eligible for credit. Finally, for immunization completion, the household gets insurance coverage for its basic health needs. ICTs can be used to extract disaggregated data of the households for case detection and notification, monitoring and evaluation, SMS reminders, active surveillance for outbreaks, mobile money for cash transfers and pay-for-performance and credit ratings based on compliance level.

Within Sindh, the socio-economic registry of the Benazir Income Support Program can serve as an underlying platform for integrating with health and social protection schemes for end-to-end solutions for the population. This essentially means that the disaggregated citizens' data of the demographic characteristics can be utilized effectively to design rational interventions and programs. Multi- sectoral initiatives such as the **Accelerated Action Plan for Reducing Malnutrition and Stunting** and **People's Poverty Reduction Program** can benefit with an integrated digital platform that can be used to track, monitor and generate credible data along with automated reports to ascertain the effectiveness of overall program and stand-alone interventions.

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**POVERTY
REDUCTION
STRATEGY IN
PAKISTAN**

Deconstructing Poverty
Reduction Paradigm in Pakistan

Introduction

Poverty is a state that should not only be defined by a lack of income but also as a set of multiple and cumulative deprivations in the access of fundamental human rights and dignity such as the right to food and nutrition, access to clean drinkable water, education, health, housing, decent work, lack of political voice and power.

Multidimensionality of poverty and interconnectedness of dimensions need to be recognized to design policies and programs that tackle poverty in a comprehensive and holistic way. Government in this regard, have a crucial role to play in addressing these root causes and creating an enabling environment for each segment of the population to be able to enjoy their rights and have their dignity respected. Clear identification of the vulnerable and marginalized groups is needed such as women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, victims of sexual orientation discriminations, Indigenous communities, members of castes and outcasts, (un)documented migrants, refugees etc. For many of these groups or individuals, constant stigmatization and discriminations push them into a vicious circle of poverty, powerlessness and exclusion. For children, poverty has devastating effects due to their particular life stage that leads to lifelong consequences.

National Perspective (Pakistan)

In case of South Asia, Pakistan is amongst those countries that are naturally blessed with the finest natural resources and human capital available in the world. However, it is quite unfortunate that despite having so much potential in all spheres we still struggle as a nation to deliver as intended. According to a World Bank report titled “State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and Its Impact on Child Stunting”¹, Baluchistan has by far the highest poverty rate, with more than 62 percent of its rural population living below the poverty line. However, the gap between rural and urban poverty is the widest in Sindh at almost 30 percent. In contrast, the urban-rural gap in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was 13 and 15 percent, respectively.

Combined with the slow pace of urbanization, only about 35 percent of the country’s population lived in urban areas in 2015-16 this gap indicates that 80 percent of Pakistan’s poor continued to live in rural areas.

Districts across Pakistan vary widely in poverty; though, the richest district in Pakistan is considered as Abbottabad at 5.8 percent poverty head-count rate followed by Karachi as the third-richest district in Pakistan in 2015, but despite its low poverty rate of 8.9 percent its large population share meant that 2.5 percent of the country’s poor lived here.

The poverty head count rate² at national poverty line in rural part of Pakistan is much higher than urban, as 30.7 percent versus 12.5 percent respectively. The average people living below poverty-line in Pakistan as of 2015-16 was calculated at 24.3 %, much lower than as it was in 2005 at 50.4%.

¹ World Bank report titled as When Water Becomes a Hazard A Diagnostic Report on “The State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and Its Impact on Child Stunting”

² 2015/16 Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES), 2015/19 Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM), and World Bank staff calculations

Some of the major reasons which contributed to this fall in poverty headcount since 2005-06 were poverty alleviation programmes like “Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), improved political situation with respect to transition from autocratic regime to democratic system, peace and tranquility, strong recovery from low GDP growth rate of 1.7% in 2008-09 to 4.5% in 2015-16, continued higher inflows of remittances especially from Middle East which are destined to relatively poor families.³

The Social Safety Programmes (SSNP) in Pakistan like Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and Social Security & Welfare, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Employees Old-age Benefit Institution (EOBI), and Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) were always there but never gaining any momentum until Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) came into existence.

However, a relatively newer intervention in terms of SSNP that is Benazir Income Support Programme, introduced in 2008-09 has gained sheer importance in easing the difficulty of poor if not reducing poverty completely. Since, inception in 2008, BISP has grown rapidly and is now the largest single cash transfer programme in Pakistan’s history. The number of beneficiaries has increased from 1.7 million in FY 2008-09 to approximately 5.63 million by 2017-18 (Refer Annex – I figure1). Collectivity Rs. 121 billion were disbursed in 2017-18 along with cash grants under 4 sub-divisionary programmes (Wasela-e-Rozgar, Wasela-e-Seehat, Wasela-e-Taleem, & Wasela-e-Haq) of BISP to the needy.

To reduce poverty and its related issues in the country, a special National Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Committee was also established in 2001 that came up with a dedicated plan to curb poverty in form of PRSP – I followed by PRSP – II. The PRSP formulation process took off in Pakistan with the finalization of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) in November 2001, which after further refinement was evolved into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in December 2003 for the period up till 2006. The PRSP since then has been the key strategy document of the federal and provincial government(s) for social development of the country.

The PRSP – II was formed on the basis of 9 broad pillars that are (i) Macroeconomic Stability and Real Sector Growth; (ii) Protecting the Poor and the Vulnerable; (iii) Increasing Productivity and Value Addition in Agriculture; (iv) Integrated Energy Development Programme; (v) Making Industry Internationally Competitive; (vi) Human Development for the 21st Century; (vii) Removing Infrastructure Bottlenecks through Public Private Partnerships; (viii) Capital and Finance for Development; and (ix) Governance for a Just and Fair System. Despite having a robust framework in form of PRSP there are still many bottlenecks that need to be addressed.

The Government of Pakistan scrutinized pro-poor expenditure in 17 sectors through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) under PRSP-II. Expenditure on pro-poor sectors in 2013-14 stood at 7.7 percent of GDP. In 2016-17, total expenditures have been increased and reached to Rs 3,027.7 billion (Refer Annex – I figure2). This is worth mentioning that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper initiative is somewhat instrumental in reducing poverty at state level. Since, inception it’s been carried forward with improvements and succor version has shown positive signs. Visible difference in terms of reducing the overall level of poverty within the country were witnessed but at micro level it still needs fine tuning and re-calibration to capitalize on its gains.

³ Economic Survey of Pakistan 2018

Unanimously most of the economist believes along with the finds of PRSP that education is the prime pillar that controls poverty directly. Urban poverty is correlated to the level of education of head of the family and therefore investment in the education sector is crucial for the social and economic development of the country.

Nationally, as far as the net rural enrolment rate is concerned it was 13 percent lower for primary school and 11 percent lower for middle school than in urban areas in 2017. For girls, these gaps stood at 17 and 14 percent, respectively. The rural female literacy rate, at 28 percent, was also less than half of that in urban areas. With almost 25 million kids out of school, the concept of development and social welfare is complete vague. Though lots of initiatives in education and health sector are currently being carried-out at state level but are not fluent enough to influence it by large.

Health is also considered as a primary pillar for sustainability of a developed society. Even though after taking so many poverty reducing measures and initiatives nationwide still the rural children are 8 percent less likely than urban children to have adequate immunization by 2 years of age, and rural women are 8 percent less likely to receive prenatal care. Pakistan has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in South Asia. Although rural-to-urban migration is high, almost 42 percent⁴ birth still take place at home in the lowest quintile, making the role of midwives crucial in providing life-saving services to those most vulnerable. Rural women were less likely than urban women to receive prenatal care from a skilled provider almost 8 percent less than women living in the urban centers. The lack of infrastructural facility is such in the rural part of the country that almost 28 percent of the women living in those regions are less likely to give birth in a facility or a hospital, and 11 percent less likely to receive postnatal care. Hence, increasing the risk to the health of mother and child and leading towards a very high maternal and infant mortality rates. Rural households are also far less likely to have access to key utilities due to lack infrastructural and deliverance system. They are 15 percent less likely to have an electricity connection and 63 percentage less likely to have a natural gas connection than urban households.

One of the important findings is that level of education is a key determinant for urban poverty as opposed to the quality of infrastructure is found to be the significant determinant for rural poverty. Another Pakistan-specific study finds that the main determinants of urban poverty are household head's education and dependency ratio; whereas, the determinants of rural poverty are assets distribution, land and livestock.⁵

Regional Perspective (Sindh)

Sindh is considered to be the second largest province of Pakistan by the size of its population with a total population of 47.88 million⁶ people and 8.59 million households, according to the 2017 Population Census and accounts for 18% of its land area. Despite rapid urbanization, 23 million people continue to reside in rural areas. Sindh contributes 32% of the national GDP, produces 56% of oil and 55% of natural gas in Pakistan and forms the backbone of the country's revenues, collecting 70% of Income Tax and 62% of Sales Tax.

⁴ (PDHS 2017-2018)

⁵ (Jamal 2005)

⁶ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2018

According to a report of SDPI⁷ Sindh is amongst the largest province in terms of rural poverty. The Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2016 presents a stark reminder of the extent of Sindh's poverty challenges and showcases Sindh's weak standing in comparison to the national scenario.

Indeed, per capita income of Sindh has risen eight-fold from \$208 in 1972-73 to \$1,749⁸ in 2016-17, topping the national average per capita by about 26 percent. However, the difference between rural and urban per capita income still remains a big question as urban per capita income of Karachi alone stood at \$6,080 in 2017 that is nearly four folds in comparison to rural parts of Sindh.

With regards to rural poverty, Sindh's rural poverty of 43% is the worst in rural Pakistan. However, district of Hyderabad in Sindh increased its urban share by about 23 percent and saw the largest reductions in poverty in 2016-17. The Gini-Coefficient⁹ stood at 33.5 percent in 2015 reflecting traces of high income and consumption inequality (income disparity) between the poor and non-poor population of Pakistan. This is the highest level of inequality ever recorded in Pakistan since 1987.

Sindh as being a province having dual economy of Rural and Urban and stark inequality between the two being Lower riparian it is highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change, absence of meaningful land reforms, high levels of illiteracy, a top-down model of governance, as one of the prime determinants in the poverty riddle specially in the rural areas. Absence of Governance, tangible assets, and slow economic growth with growing population has limited the space for jobs in urban centers thus compromising the overall sustainability of the effort.

Pakistan continues to lag behind its neighbors and income peers in terms of child nutritional outcomes. Despite reductions in poverty and increases in wash access, stunting rates remain high. Indeed, stunting rates were somewhat lower in 2018 (38 percent) than in 2001 (42 percent) across Pakistan. At the provincial level, 48 percent children in Sindh were stunted in 2017. The incidence of diarrhea, a critical factor behind immediate weight loss, intestinal damage, and malabsorption of nutrients, also remained at 22 percent between 2006 and 2015 and again shows no improvement in the more recent MICS for Punjab and Sindh. This is clear indicator that predicts vulnerability of poor toward better/improved health and hygiene facilities in the rural part of Sindh, hence, creating a downward affect in poverty reduction.

Though there is high income disparity and lack of adequate infrastructure/health facilities still the Government of Sindh has kept education sector¹⁰ as its priority, as demonstrated through increased education expenditure in the province. According to renowned economists like Dr. Kaiser Bengali unemployment and education is the foremost reason of urban poverty. Therefore, considering the fact the government of Sindh has allocated the second-highest budgetary allocation in the province of Sindh in terms of educational spending. Between FY09 and FY15, nominal education spending grew on average by about 20 percent annually, while in real terms education expenditure increased by 10 percent annually during the same period (Figure 3 ref Annex- I). As a percentage of provincial GDP, education expenditures are growing steadily, and amounted to 1.6 percent of provincial GDP in FY15.

⁷ Sustainable Development Policy Institute

⁸ [//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Pakistani_provinces_by_gross_domestic_product](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Pakistani_provinces_by_gross_domestic_product)

⁹ Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. Thus, a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.

¹⁰ Sindh Public Expenditure Review – 2017

Above all the Government of Sindh has scaled up its efforts to resort the issue of poverty at rural level through multi-dimensional interventions. It is largely believed that the rural poverty is directly sponsored by the lack of asset acquisition and infrastructure. In this regards, Government of Sindh had rolled out the Union-Council Based Poverty Reduction programme phase-I (now called People's Poverty Reduction Program) in 2009-10 on pilot basis in 4 districts to harness social mobilization for assets generation and reducing vulnerabilities. The program employed multi-pronged interventions including micro-health insurance, income generation grants, community investment funds, low-cost housing and others. This intervention widely determined the proportion of the target population that were extremely poor (poverty band 0-11 under the Poverty score card) and chronically poor (12-18) has reduced significantly. Out of the major UCBPRP interventions/programmes, Vocational Training Programme (VTP) had the greatest impact, resulting in nearly five-fold increase in average Poverty score card's scores, as followed by CIF (Community investment funds). In other words, investing in skills appears to be a more meaningful intervention than providing cash through micro/meso loans and grants.

Sindh Government's independent initiative of UCBPRP courtesy with international donor partner EU (European Union) funded programme termed as Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) has also intervened for the purpose of reducing rural poverty and the lack of women empowerment specifically in Sindh. The programme focused more on to poverty reduction through women empowerment. The programme has stretched out in 8 districts of Sindh to reduce poverty, and through provision of generous financial support of the European Union (EU) and helping hands of implementing partners (NRSP, TRDP, SRSO and Technical Assistance partner EY). Collectively, more than 100,000 households have benefited from these interventions.

So far SUCCESS has helped and has been a critical role player for government of Sindh to scale up the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) that was implemented in four districts initially. Looking at the accomplishments of the SUCCESS Programme and UCBPRP Phase I, in 2017, the Government of Sindh expanded UCBPRP, implemented by SRSO, to an additional six districts including Khairpur, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas Umer Kot, Badin and Thatta with the total budget of PKR 4.9 billion. After the launch of Extended Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) in January 2018, extending Government of Sindh's coverage of Community Driven Development (CDD) to 18 out of 23 rural districts in Sindh, with 8 districts being covered with the financial support of the European Union (EU) under the SUCCESS Programme. Within the next five years, the GoS funded Extended-UCBPRP (phase-II) and EU funded SUCCESS programme together will benefit 1.8 million households (approx. 12 million people) in Sindh.

Impediments faced by Public Private Interventions at Sindh level

Though the government of Sindh partnering with other foreign donor agencies strives to curb the issue of poverty from Sindh but has only delivered to a small extent as compared to it intend. Poor government branding, a somewhat hands-off approach to overseeing its implementation, and an inward-looking operational strategy both by Government of Sindh and implementing partners evidenced by little knowledge generation and sharing, has led to the UCBPRP having small impact on shaping and influencing Sindh's policy narrative¹¹.

¹¹ Impact Assessment of Programme Interventions of the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme/2018-19

The Government of Sindh as an enabler fell short of meeting expectations, particularly in relation to its inability to create strategic and operational linkages between the Program, provincial line departments and the local governments which may have cemented the status quo, whereby government and communities work within their own spheres.

The lack of engagement with the private sector constitutes a major flaw in design and implementation. It is difficult to understand why a poverty reduction initiative would choose to not involve private sector and also why it would not focus on women's financial inclusion. A more important finding is that over-reliance on Community Investment Funds and its use as the principal instrument for the maintenance phase is difficult to justify because it provides no incentive for partners to develop exit strategies.

Recommendations

Urban Poverty

The major culprit of urban poverty is considered as unemployment and education. There are several ways through which poverty at urban level can be controlled and even be eradicated in the long-run.

- According to Dr. Kaiser Bengali, more than 55 percent of urban poverty is directly driven by Unemployment. This unemployment is correlated to rural to urban migration and this is a major reason of poverty and lack of job availability in the urban centers. This could be controlled through various interventions such as, **creation of rural growth centers** in the rural districts. **Creation of jobs on the basis of quota** with strict employment in the region of birth of the employee.
- **Public private partnership-based initiatives must be carried** in industries like Construction, housing, education, health and transportation. These industries are inter linked with each other for example housing alone accompanies more than 80 different sectors that provides significant jobs in the labor market. Through this intervention there are possibilities that unemployment can be reduced to some extent. Employment can also be increased through **establishing labor intensive industries**. Most of the poor in urban are low skilled, and indulge in petty services or subsistence activities, hence, labor intensive industries must be promoted by the state to gain their share.
- Since, the budgetary allocation is an important element in our discussion. The fiscal budget allocation for education each year with minor increase has only researched to 2.2 percent of the US\$ 320 billion economy. Countries like Afghanistan, Tanzania, Vietnam and India averagely spend more than 4 percent of their GDP on education alone. However, they all have relatively similar dynamics and none is considered as a developed economy. So, it is essential that Pakistan should have at least 4-5 percent of budget specifically allocated for education purpose.
- Currently the development of public sector education and its infrastructure is mostly associated with rural development. However, it is equally important chapter for urban development as well. Awareness campaigns must take place on regular basis not only in rural areas but also in urban districts. The head of household or the breadwinner is responsible for the upbringing and encouragement of their children. Therefore, the awareness campaigns must be rolled out regularly within the community and amongst the household heads to make them aware of the importance of education for them and their families.
- Population explosion is also equally important a culprit in deriving rural and urban poverty. A lot more needs to be done in terms of controlling the birth rate in the region. Since, the land space is a constraint and with each percent of rising population rate the demand for food, shelter, and other necessities increases, this eventually leads to shortfall in resource allocation. Furthermore, this also led to the concept of diminishing marginal productivity specifically in agriculture which employs almost 40 percent of total participatory labor force, hence, reduced wage rate and returns.
- The minimum wage rate must significantly be increased to at least \$ 180 (Rs. 25,000) /month or \$ 2,160 per capita per annum. Since, the increasing inflationary pressures and dollar price hikes has led the purchasing power of a common man to squeeze. Therefore, it is essential that not only inflation must be controlled but also a justifiable compensatory wage rate must be offered so that it can at least offer some sort of relief and be somewhat instrumental in reducing poverty at state level. Wage-flooring must

also be ensured by the state, the minimum wage rate for a Master or above must not be equitant to that of a matric or intermediately qualified individual. By creating such slabs, it will eventually increase the demand for higher studies and spending more time in schooling amongst the masses to acquire a more remunerating job. This practice needs to be ensured at state level both in public as well as private organizations. So, this approach will work on a dual bases not only it will increase the drive of attaining higher education but will also produce more specialized work force in future.

Rural Poverty

The Rural poverty is a broad chapter and fortunately most of the work that is being done in Pakistan in context of reducing poverty is being carried in rural areas.

- The primary driver of rural poverty is considered to be lack of infrastructure and domestic asset acquisition. The rural population's life is directly hampered by the lack of availability of infrastructure that includes housing, water access, toilet access, educational institutes, hospitals, markets, road networks and so forth.
- Rural growth centers must be established in order to stop rural-urban migration. These growth center can help in creating more job opportunities within the district and can be instrumental in reducing the urban city light's charm and attraction that is one of the reasons for rural-urban migration. SMEs must also be encouraged that can provide a valuable contribution in not only generating employment but also capacity building of locals.
- **One village one product (OVOP)** is considered to be a successful model in terms of reducing poverty of rural population. In early 2006, this was also introduced in Pakistan the idea was initially borrowed from Thailand, by the looks of its success rate through this intervention. The Government must seriously take up this initiative with more revamped and restructured model for this can surely be a game changer for boosting Pakistan's declining exports and also improving the status-quo of rural population. It will serve the twin purpose of gainful employment opportunities at the doorsteps of the rural population on the one hand and will minimize migration of people to cities on the other
- It's also really surprising that the Annual Development Budget (ADB) of Sindh does not have anyhead for urban or rural development alike. Hence, it is essential to have a **dedicated allocation in terms of Rural and Urban development programmes**.
- Though recent studies on pilot districts of Sindh, it showed that SUCCESS and UCBPRP intervention schemes had significantly impacted in reducing the poverty at rural level. However, more than 10 different types of interventions were carried out of which TVST (Technical Vocational and Skill Trainings) had the greatest impact in improving the lives of residents of the observed region. Therefore, it is essential that the government at rural and district level **must pay special attention on TVST programmes** which will not only improve the living standards of the people but will also increase Human development.
- Creating employment opportunities in rural areas must be the priority, in most cases migration from rural areas to urban areas is reason for rise in poverty in urban area. Higher wage differential between rural and urban area and higher probability of obtaining job in urban area creates migration. For reverse migration it is important to **reduce wage differential**.

- The living standards and incomes of the rural population must be increased, to which most of the poor belong. The most effective way to do is to **enhance agriculture productivity through use of hybrid seeds and latest mechanization techniques, including livestock**. The main instrument that has been used for this purpose is the easing of credit constraint and extending commercial bank loans to small farmers. During the last five years, the bank lending to agriculture particularly small farmers has multiplied many folds, more efforts need to be done in easing the availability of flexy loan to the farms and especially tenants.
- The government must also try to inculcate Programmes like **National Rural Employment Schemes** especially in terms of agriculture sector. Like in India, The MGNREGA (Mahatma Ghandi National Rural Employment Act) was initiated with the aims of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The farmers in their lien period are subject to receive this allowance for more than 3 months. Such Schemes in Pakistan can also create a significant effect in reducing poverty at rural level. Though it's another debate that it will incur heavy pressures on the subsidy head.
- Another important side is health standards. Pakistan has extremely high rates of malnutrition and stunting at rural level despite the fact that agricultural production is increasing, the levels of stunting and malnutrition have not decreased in the last 40 years but the overall situation has actually worsened. Stunting is irreversible and has severe life changing consequences and most importantly, it reduces income as it results in 40% lower lifetime earnings. Healthy development must be prioritized, not just physically but also mentally, with a **special focus on infrastructure and service delivery of health facilities** to pregnant women and children and their healthy growth to ensure future generations are healthy enough to improve their living.
- **A women empowered labor force must be generated** specifically in rural areas. This means that more women must be given opportunities in the labor force because women tend to increase their spending on health and education of their children and family. They are also found instrumental in increasing the economic activity through spending more hence, increasing the overall wellbeing of the society.
- Gender Pay Gap is a big factor in low levels of female employments and higher rate of poverty. The income differential between urban Female House Holds and Male House Holds is about 50 percent as the average income in urban Female House Holds is Rs. 7,657 as compared to Rs. 15,173 in urban Male House Holds. The rural income differential is even larger 60 percent. So, it is necessary to **level the pay gap between both the sexes** to encourage more women in labor force.
- The on-going social mobilization must be coupled with the new design include innovations such as District Development Challenge Fund, create a social business model and encourage market widening in terms of allowing for a wide variety of players (**public private partnership**) to work with communities for development of the rural audience.
- Another yet, important chapter is equity and justice. This includes **strengthening of the state machinery and un-prejudice behavior** as this is a big hurdle in the maintain equity at state as well as provincial level. The poor are always at the verge of shock and for their development, and driving them out of poverty it is essential that their voices must be heard on levels.

- Last but not the least PSC (Poverty Score Card) **must not** be considered as reference tool to measure poverty and its results. However, the MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) is a more viable and accurate tool to measure poverty at all stages. As MPI is not caloric or income sensitive measure, it measures education, health and living standards under 15 relevant indicators.

Conclusion

Overall, the state of poverty is considered as a sense of deprivation not only in terms of material goods but also deprivations in the access of fundamental human rights and dignity such as the right to food and nutrition, access to clean drinkable water, education, health, housing, decent work, lack of political voice and power. The rural and urban poverty divide is extremely high in Pakistan that is considerably sponsored by afore mention reasons. This paper estimates the determinants of poverty in Pakistan at national and regional level. The incidence of poverty is relatively higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The above results also shed light on very important policy issues; a higher premium on the level of education, for instance, suggests that higher education and employment status are important factors that can lead to a significant reduction of poverty.

Thus, access to education for poor households is the key determinant of poverty reduction. Employment status is another very important variable, as casual paid employees, unpaid family workers, seasonally employed and the like have a higher probability to fall into the poor or vulnerable groups. The analysis of different poverty statuses and their respective determinants shows that there is requirement for targeted policy to provide quick relief through employment opportunities especially in urban areas, and establishment of rural growth centers for rural employment as through this migration process can also be reduced to a significant level. A women lead or empowered rural growth is more viable option as it can significantly help in reducing poverty through increased spending on their families and children. Social mobilization through community driven development was also found an important pillar in reducing the vulnerability of the poor at rural level in Sindh. Intervention like SUCCESS and UCBPRP had influential impact on the lives of rural population and suggested that Technical Vocational and Skill Training can be a game changer in shaping lives of the rural population. Thus, poverty can be reduced to a significant level provided effective Social Safety Nets schemes must be introduced and also public private partnership-based intervention should be encouraged.

Annexure – I

Figure: 1 Benazir Income Support Programme Total Beneficiary and Yearly Grants of PRSP Interventions

Figure: 2 Pro-Poor Expenditure in From

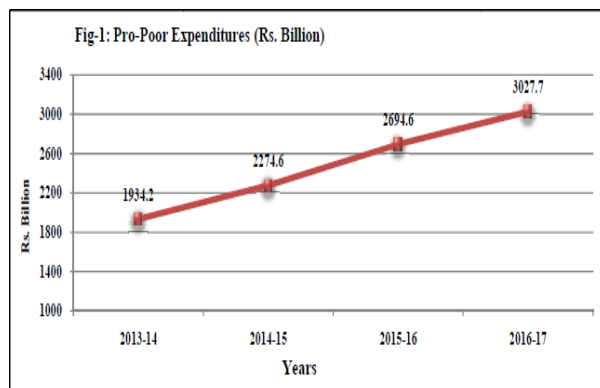
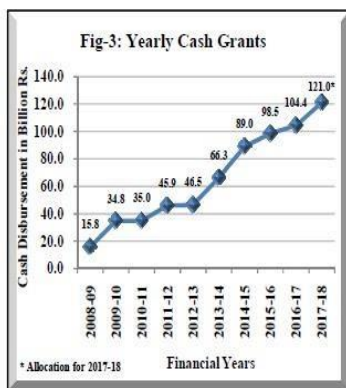
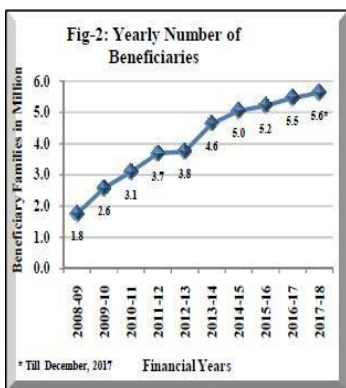
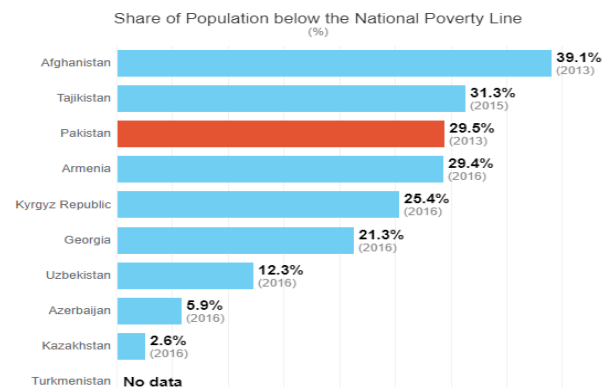
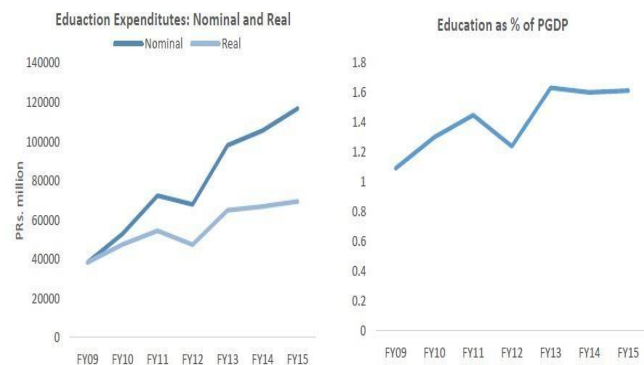


Figure: 3 Educational Expenditure Snapshot Overtime in Province of Sindh National Poverty Line (Head Count)

Figure: 4 Global Poverty Level Comparison at



Source: Data from Accountant General of Pakistan.

Source: Asian Development Bank. Basic Statistics 2018

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**A CASE FOR NEW
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
POLICY FOR SINDH**

Purpose

The Sindh Labour Policy of 2018 serves as the motif upon which the Government of Sindh shall implement its strategic plans, rules and regulations pertaining to labor. It pledges to safeguard labor rights and promote economic growth throughout the province. The policy provides recommendations on how the government can preserve the rights of all workers in the province. It discusses issues including but not limited to unionization, minimum wage, social security, workplace protection and participatory economic development.

However, the policy remains inadequate in terms of addressing several key areas. This paper will underline the need of dealing with those areas and present policy recommendations on how the government may do so.

Female Labour Force Participation

The labor force survey published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics for 2017-18 reveals that women make up only 33.35% of the total labor force of Pakistan (20-23). This applies to all people above the age of 10. The Sindh Labour Policy of 2018 effectively considers individuals above the ages of 16 to be employable. By that metric, only 31.57% of the labor force of Pakistan is women. Employed women make up 30% of this total labor force. Sindh remains below the national average at 29.79%, with employed women making up 26.57%. 36.78% of the rural labor force and 15.52% of the urban labor force consists of women. These values have decreased by an average of 2.5% from 2013 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 11-37). This is unfortunate given women make up 46.9% of the entire population of Sindh. As such there is an urgent need to integrate more women within both the rural and urban labor force.

The McKinsey Global Institute reported in 2015 that if the inclusion of women in the labor force matched that of men across the world, global GDP could rise by as much as 12 trillion USD. Even if Pakistan's share of Global GDP was to remain constant at 0.5%, Pakistan would see an increase in GDP of 60 billion USD. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) suggests that Pakistan's GDP would grow by 30% if the gender gap was closed (5). Sindh could play a huge role in this economic growth. The Sindh government, having already pledged to protect the wellbeing of all peoples of Sindh and to create the space required for personal and professional empowerment, must pay additional attention to the obstacles to female labor force participation. Increased income for women brings about not only economic growth but also greater personal and financial security for individual women, more decision-making power in the household, benefits for their family and greater control over their adult lives (Muzones and Tanaka 2-3). There are unique issues facing both rural and urban women. Wage discrimination, transport and mobility, cultural limitations, maternity and workplace security play a great role in determining the inclination that women have to enter the labor force (Muzones and Tanaka 3-7).

Sexual Harassment in the workplace: Sexual harassment presents threats to the physical safety and mental peace of women. This culture also gives households more impetus to restrict the mobility of their women and hence it is a major obstacle to increased female labor force participation. Strategies to combat sexual harassment in the workplace may be geared more towards urban settings where offices can become a closed space that allows for harassment. For examples, employers use their power dynamic to intimidate female employees and male employees use their work-related association with female employees for nefarious ends. Harassment can be viewed as any behavior that is unwelcomed by the subject of that behavior. Sexual harassment translates into actions such as unwanted sexual requests, pressure for sexual favors, lewd gestures etc. 96% of the respondents in a survey of 200 women in Karachi stated that they or their colleagues had suffered sexual harassment (Sadruddin).

The first recommendation in this regard would be for the legislature to reaffirm its commitment to The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, particularly to Section 3 which mandates the formation of special complaints committees for women to approach in cases of harassment. We recommend additions to the guidelines present in the act. These committees are to consist of at least four members for every thirty people employed on a permanent or temporary basis. Three-quarters of this committee must be female and must be chaired by a female who possesses a managerial role within the organization. At least one member of the committee must be from domestic support staff if they are employed within the organization. This committee must be first tasked with drawing up a clear code of conduct, specific to the organization and complaints process. Each labor court set up in the province must have at least one designated officer to liaison with women and/or the complaints committees of the organizations that fall under their jurisdiction. There must be one designated officer for every five organizations that fall under a court's jurisdiction. This person must possess at the minimum, three years of working as a social worker and/or working towards women empowerment and must have knowledge of labor and criminal law (Government of India). Several women work in rural work or the informal sector and for them, local government bodies must also consist of such committees built on similar models. The inquiry process must resemble that already detailed within Section 4 of the aforementioned Act 2010. We recommend the complaints committee be given the right to approach the labor court directly over a complaint if it feels that the relevant competent authority is unfit to deal with or has a conflict of interest with the complaint. The policy drafted by a committee for an organization must be communicated to all employees. This committee has the right to investigate and prosecute any and all complaints of harassment, including of harassment that occurred away from the organization's premises. Organizations must hold biannual sexual harassment awareness seminars. Workplaces must have the policy detailed on its poster-boards.

Transportation: Women also face harassment in the process of travelling to their place of work. Safe travel is often expensive or is contingent upon the male members of the family. This reduced mobility hampers their chances of seeking education, training and employment (Pakistan Today). The target must be to provide safe, comfortable and affordable means of transport to women, particularly within urban areas. Women-only transportation has been examined in several developing countries (Tara 71-74). While changing societal norms around women's mobility is vital for long-term change (Shah), women-only transport can provide short-term redress and a measure of safety and comfort (Kehoe). Hence, we would recommend the establishment of large women-only public bus fleets within urban centers. The Labour Force survey of 2017-18 indicates that 5.59% of the population of Pakistan is women in urban Sindh. This translates to approximately 12 million women. This figure must guide the number and arrangement of buses. These are to include female conductors, drivers and armed female police officers. The number of female traffic wardens must be increased.

All organizations should be mandated to provide transport for women if company policies require them to work for any duration after 7:00 PM ("Work Timings for Female Employees"). All companies designated as large enterprises are mandated to provide transport for any female employees who request it, regardless of working hours. All company-provided transport must include an armed guard, hired from a professional security service. Companies are to be disallowed from making their female employees work overtime for more than two days in a week. All intra-city railways must include female-only compartments. This can be extended to inter-city railways on an experimental basis. Cab services like Careem can be incentivized to introduce ride-sharing for women. Ride-sharing is a model adopted by services like Lyft in North America ("About Shared Rides") where different individuals who are not associated with each other can travel in the same vehicle, dividing costs.

Wage Discrimination: The Sindh Labour Policy 2018 emphasizes on paying women and men equally for the same amount of work but banning gender wage discrimination must be further enshrined into law (Khan 13-16). The private sector must be prohibited from engaging in wage discrimination and fined heavily in case of violation. Reporting requirements should be kept in place ("Spotlight on the Gender Pay Gap"). Companies must keep pay records and audits, arranged by gender and the Ministry of Labour

must be reserve the right to investigate these records. These records must detail information such as nature of work, duration, wage, timing etc. Companies must inform employees of all pay scales and categories. The government has already applied a 15% quota for women in public sector jobs. This must be strictly implemented.

Maternity: There already exist laws that guarantee paid maternity leave for 12 weeks of which six are post-natal. The problem exists largely with ambiguity and lack of application. The policy of maternity leave must be a blanket policy that applies to all private and public sector organizations including small-to-medium enterprises, charitable organizations, non-profit organizations, educational institutions etc. Maternity leave benefits should be extended to mothers who adopt children, with 12 weeks of paid maternity leave being received after documentation of adoption is submitted. Policies laid down in the West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance 1958 are to be reaffirmed. Organizations are to be heavily fined in the event of violation. If a female employee is terminated from their employment after they have entered matrimony, they can engage in legal action against the employer if the employer appears to have terminated them without due reason and on the pretext that the concerned employee may soon begin a family. Post-natal paid maternity leave must be extended by four weeks in the event of post-natal illness, as verified by a doctor.

Other reforms: It is vital for the government to take overarching steps to counter the cultural limitations placed on women's mobility and freedom to work. Adverts on television, newspaper and the radio promoting women's rights can be released, along with awareness seminars within public sector organizations. Increased microfinance loans and grants to potential female entrepreneurs and cottage industry workers can provided through institutions like the Benazir Income Support Program. All public and private organizations should be mandated to provide adequate daycare centers for the children of working mothers. Special incubation centers can also be founded, the details for which are included in the next sections.

Fostering Entrepreneurship in Rural & Urban Areas

A vibrant culture of entrepreneurship can allow numerous individuals to gain self-sufficiency all while stimulating economic growth via investment, resource extraction, and money circulation. Pakistan's potential for entrepreneurship is high, with a population that is dynamic and forward-thinking. Yet several hindrances stand in the way of the development of this culture. These include a lack of financing, inadequate expertise, unfavorable bureaucracies and lack of organization

Bureaucratic hurdles: Budding entrepreneurs often find themselves mired in complicated bureaucracy, having to obtain different licenses from civil administration (Ndziba-Whitehead 98). This hinders the entrepreneurial process and wastes valuable time and resources. Hence, this process should be simplified and instructions on obtaining licenses should be made simpler. The government can establish a consultancy where agents assist entrepreneurs in gaining these licenses. However, corruption is rife within the granting of these licenses. Government officials demand large sums in bribes as a precondition to the processing the business approvals. Budding entrepreneurs do not have the resources to pay these bribes and the licensing process effectively becomes an auction where the individual who can pay the highest amount gains permission to operate, regardless of their merit. Dealing with this rent-seeking in the long term necessitates a shift in culture. However, raising the salaries of these lower-level officials could deter them from demanding bribes. A more robust and accessible complaints mechanism and stricter action against such officials is also recommended. (ul Haque, Idrees and Ahmed 51). It is also important to ensure the protection of intellectual property rights.

Training and financing: The government, through the Sindh Small Industries Corporation (SSIC) or the Sindh branch of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) should make attempt to create a record of formalized small business entrepreneurs, especially for women entrepreneurs (Goheer). This will allow for future plans to adequately demarcate the areas and people where funding is needed or infrastructure should be developed on a priority basis. Several credit organizations providemicrofinance loans to entrepreneurs but they often leave out deserving women entrepreneurs because they are seen as a bad credit risk. Such organizations should investigate in order to observe the extent to which they reach out to female entrepreneursand the reasons as to why they deny credit to them. They should also be mandated to keep an audit of their loans that can be investigated by the SSIC/SMEDA or the Ministry of Labour. Organizations should be fined if they are seen to have denied women credit without valid reason. All public degree-awarding institutions should have a module introduced that instructs students in the art of entrepreneurship (Goheer). This can be extended to diploma-awarding institutions as well. The institution can arrange for these modules to include a showing of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that relate to entrepreneurship. These provide the unique benefit of instruction from extremely qualifiedindividuals through digital means. There exist women entrepreneurs in the country who could serve to inspire and teach other budding female entrepreneurs. It is recommended that the government through SSIC/SMEDA arrange for thirty or more of such entrepreneurs to attend seminars organized by the government and open to the public. A representative association should be established for women entrepreneurs in order for them to coordinate with the government.

The question of financing entrepreneurs requires finding a means to provide loans and balance risk. Individuals defaulting on loans can cause heavy losses for banks and for the government. It is vital to initiate structural changes that push the frontline employees in such microfinance organizations to better assess the risk of entrepreneurs. Public lending agencies should implement a pay-per-performance system in addition to a relatively lower fixed baseline wage (Cole, Kanz and Klappe 3). However, functioning excessively on high- powered incentives makes loan officers more risk-averse. The payment based on performance incentives should be provided within two to four months rather than awaitingthe profits from the loan (Kanz 31). The government should invest in collateral-free loans for women entrepreneurs, as the cost of collateral hinders deserving women from receiving finance (International Finance Group). It is also recommended that the government support women in the creation of fiduciary accounts with their minor children as beneficiaries without having to gain the permission of male legal guardians.

Infrastructure development, particularly in the realm of renewable energy and broadband can significantly improve entrepreneurship levels (Audretsch et al.) Broadband allows greater connectivity and communication. We recommend the provision of solar panels to rural homes, particularly of entrepreneurs.

Incubation: Business incubators can provide a great deal of assistance to potential entrepreneurs. They help in developing networks, learning skills and gaining traction (Mahmood). There exist business incubators and accelerators within several public sector universities in Pakistan. It is recommended that the government establish a business incubator within each public sector university in Sindh, except for medical colleges. These incubators must not be headed by university academic or administrative officials but by businesspeople holding the relevant skills (Tarar). Each incubator must have at least one ofthe following: a legal expert to assist in the legal procedures of setting up a business, a development expert to hone the business abilities and ideas of the start-ups, and a marketing expert to instruct in promotion and public relations. Business incubators outsideof universities should be set up in both rural and urban centres based upon data collected which shows the prevalence of potential entrepreneurs in an area, although the nature of rural business incubators may be different than that of their urban counterparts.

The government, with the assistance of economic and business experts, can formulate an objective set of criteria for the admission of start-ups into these incubators (Adegbite 163). These criteria can apply to all incubators, to prevent the allotment of incubator space on the basis of nepotism. Tenants at these incubators must not be allowed to remain at the incubator for a more than a continuous period of five years. The government should promote the establishment of private incubators as well, by giving incentives such as affordable land, access to facilities and low-interest loans. Private universities can be given grants to do the same. Local governments can be given the mandate to lead the construction of these incubators, with the provincial government adopting a supervisory role and providing the financing (Adegbite 164). Public sector incubators should be registered as not-for-profit companies seeking to break even while private sector incubators should be profit-seeking limited liability companies. Certain incubators, particularly those that focus on industrial manufactured goods or similar areas, can be located near large industrial estates and could utilize abandoned factories or warehouses. Plots of land should be set aside for the tenants to move into after they exit the incubator. These should be provided provisionally a year after the tenants move into the centre. Utilities should be subsidized for the first two years of a tenant's residency at the centre, after which market rates should be applied (Adegbite 165). Tenants should be given the option of purchasing the incubator in order to continue their operations from there. This can be done via deferred payments but must be done at a market rate, such that the funds from the purchase can be used to establish another incubator.

Clustering: We would further recommend the establishment of urban enterprise clusters, as detailed in the Proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy for Sindh (Bengali 118-150). Businesses that employ similar inputs or produce similar outputs can be provided space to establish themselves in proximity to each other. This would allow them to benefit from common resources or markets. To quote from the aforementioned document, "clusters act as a large integrated plant, enjoying most of the benefits of economies of scale that large units accrue. The cooperative effort can also serve to reduce individual capital requirements and distributes risks associated with start-ups in enterprise development." 50 of such clusters should be established throughout the province, with the government providing at least 5% of the initial costs of establishment with a total of 10 million PKR for the entire project and providing 40,000 PKR for the vocational training of each trainee.

The question of rural entrepreneurship revolves around cottage industries and how they can be promoted better. Policies within rural areas are implemented through Rural Support Programs (RSPs) and Village Organizations (VOs). Entrepreneurship training programs and seminars can be organized through these councils. Rural growth centers or rural service hubs should be formalized (Bengali 118-150). Villages in close proximity to each other should be grouped together as clusters and one or two of those villages that have particular attributes such as population size; literacy rate etc. should be identified as rural hubs. These would be given priority in future investment and resource allocation because they will provide the most economic returns, particularly to the cluster. Greater detail of the aforementioned policy ideas is contained within the draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and should be adopted as a policy by the government.

Capacity Development of Population

The structure for increasing access to and quality of vocational training is largely present within the current programs of the Sindh Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (STEVTa). Improving quality and access is paramount. As a first, individuals who undergo vocational training would be better able to find employment if the field and quality of the education they receive matches the requirements of the national economy. This involves the government meeting with business leaders and investors in order to determine the technical needs of businesses in Sindh. The curricula can be shaped according to these needs. The government can expand its vocational training institutes by partnering with the private sector, where the government funds a part of the cost and the other funding is done by private

businesses or from contributions by the students (Wallenborn 58-61). The workers for whose education a business pays can be made to work in that organization immediately after their training concludes. These institutes can make use of e-learning. Instruction videos recorded by experts in one area can be distributed to all vocational training institutes. Cooperation with international organizations like the World Bank can help provide additional funding and expertise. Oftentimes the prospect of losing out on wages by attending training courses can act as a deterrent. Individuals can be compensated financially for attending such courses (Eichhorst et al. 32). There must be less bureaucratic oversight, allowing educationists and relevant experts to take the leading role in this field (Eichhorst et al. 31). Cooperation with NGOs can be beneficial as well.

Vocational training remains only a part of the overall question of capacity development. It is important to impart skills and education that will allow citizens to enter both vocational and high-skilled fields. This involves improvement of the quality and access of public schooling at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Tapping Pakistan's Potential Niche Market in Global Economy

There exist certain areas where Pakistan can create a competitive advantage in the global market and boost its exports. These exist both within urban and rural centres

Rural centres: Pakistan can add to its cotton sales by expanding its production in organic cotton exports. Sindh can become a key player in this regard. This is because biological farming methods are still very prevalent in the province. The demand for organic textile has increased a great deal in the More Economically Developed Countries (Abrar, Zhilong and Xinming). The European Union has added regulations that allow only for textiles that are free from the use of harmful dyes and other toxic materials often used in textile production. Environmental awareness has made many consumers in the West conscious of the sort of products that they use. Organic cotton is grown without the use of pesticides, growth regulators and defoliants. This is where the training of farmers and agriculturalists comes in. Small farmers can undergo training on how to better maintain their organically produced crops. Additionally, the government can deter the use of environmentally dangerous substances (Inayatullah et al. 37). The duty on pesticides can be increased and research should take place to determine the effectiveness of pesticides. Those seen to lack effectiveness while causing environmental harm should be prohibited throughout the province. The use of older pesticides such as chlorinated and organophosphate pesticides which cause environmental harm should be banned and supplies should be confiscated and destroyed. All textile mills must have effluent treatment plants. Those that do not comply with this must be fined heavily. Materials used to reduce agricultural pollution should have no duties or taxes placed on them (Inayatullah et al. 37). Organic farming is labor-intensive, which is a positive for Pakistan as labor is in large supply (Abrar, Zhilong and Xinming). The government can assist in the marketing for this organic product. It can partner with large exporters and develop strategies to advertise its organic cotton products to the global market. It must invest larger sums of money into research to strengthen plant health organically (Barik and Sarkar 85-87). The nature of scientific improvements required is beyond the scope of this paper.

Urban centres: Other main exports of Pakistan are agricultural with the exception of software. Information technology exports amounted to 2bn dollars in 2014-2015 according to the managing director of Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB). The first responsibility of the Sindh government would be to establish Software Technology Parks (STPs) in Sindh in collaboration with the PSEB. These provide conducive areas for software companies to develop. These should include meeting space, physical space, uninterrupted power and internet supply, lecture rooms and laboratories. Women

should be encouraged to take part in this by providing incentives for female-led start-ups and other recommendations already stated. This centre should include a space for products relating to the Internet of Things, allowing entrepreneurs to create and design devices that function remotely via the internet. Experts should be hired to provide knowledge of both information technology and entrepreneurial skills. Any private technology parks set up should have certain concessions such as a 50% capital grant from the government in order to establish the park (Electronics and Information Technology 10-22). They should receive a 100% Stamp duty registration exemption on purchase/lease of land/Office space/IT Building, provided that operations begin within 2 years. The government can determine the maximum amount of funding it can provide to such parks for establishment, operations and training. Start-ups that seek to participate in national or international fairs/competitions should be given financial and logistical assistance that would enable them to participate. The government can provide or can connect private investors to provide seed funding to IT start-ups (Electronics and Information Technology 10-22). Any start-up that receives funding in this manner will have to undergo a review by a relevant committee of the government every three months. This can be a maximum of 6-7 lac PKR.

Additionally, the government can improve the quality of IT syllabi in schools and universities. It can provide students in public universities the option of taking a break within their degree program to pursue IT development. MOOCs can be vital in public universities and STPs. Fostering the interest of younger students in high school can prove useful. This can be done through better syllabi, visits by computer experts, provision of high-tech computer systems and other IT materials. The government should have competitions such as Hackathons for budding software engineers, with large rewards for winners (Electronics and Information Technology 10-22). We also recommend that the Sindh government seek to exactly replicate the policy commitments laid out in Goals 3, 4 and 5 of the Information Technology Policy of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) (Punjab 16-20). The aforementioned goals provide a framework of promoting information technology and entrepreneurship in the Punjab province and all of its objectives can be mirrored in Sindh.

Additional Protection of Labour Rights

The past few decades have seen a recent development in the trend of organizations outsourcing labor to employee leasing firms (Parvez). The organization or the latter firm hire these workers for very short contracts or sometimes even on daily wages. These workers are not considered the permanent employees of either organization and are hence exploited. Steps must be taken in order to curb this practice. Firstly, all government regulations must be applied on to employee leasing firms. Such firms must be obligated to take those employees on a fulltime or part-time contract basis rather than as independent contractors. Such contracts must last for 6 months at least. For projects that last beyond a certain duration such as 3 months or for work that is not limited in duration (e.g., janitorial services) hiring workers on a daily basis must be forbidden. The minimum wage of 78.13 RS per hour must be strictly enforced.

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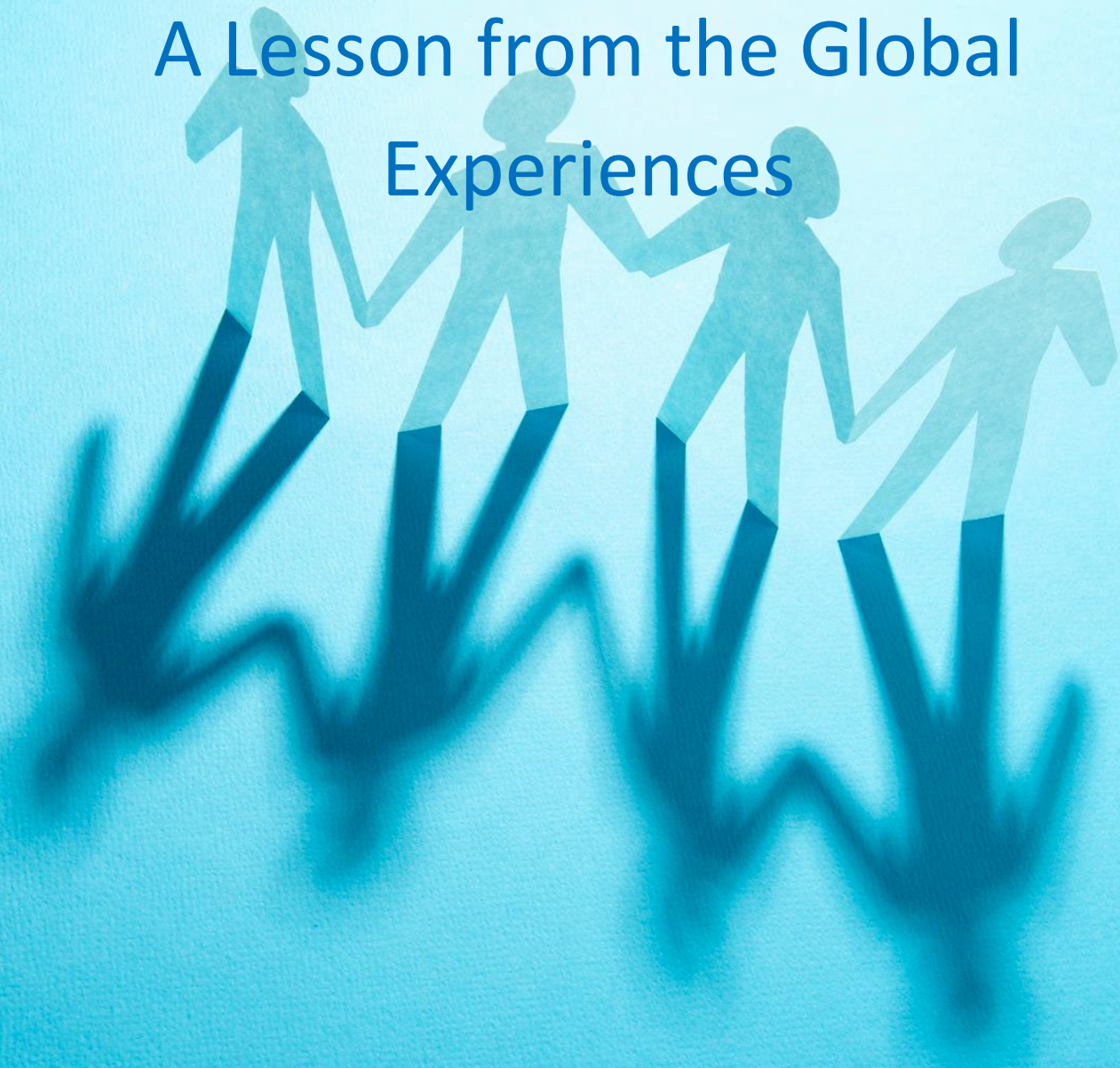
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SOCIAL PROTECTION STRATEGY FOR SINDH

A Lesson from the Global
Experiences



Introduction

Government of Sindh has recently announced seven programs that will be the cornerstone of social protection for the underprivileged and impoverished segments of the population. According to the announcement, following seven priority programs will be rolled out:

Bhook Mitao Programme (Hunger Eradication): This program will focus on food security and nutrition. Under this program, the under-privileged segments will be eligible to receive cash stipends and nutritious food.

Family Health: This program will focus on providing health services to all with a special focus on women and impoverished segments. Coverage of primary healthcare services is also under consideration.

Maternal & Child Support: This program is purported to provide integrated maternal and child health services along with family planning support. A broad-based social protection plans to support mothers is also under consideration which may employ conditional cash transfers to induce positive health-seeking behavior of mothers, especially during the first critical 1000 days following conception.

Peoples Poverty Reduction: Initially piloted in 4 poverty-stricken districts in rural Sindh, the People's Poverty Reduction Program is to be scaled to urban and rural districts under the poverty reduction strategy roadmap.

Benazir Kissan (Farmers): This program is grounded in providing targeted subsidy, specifically to small farmers to improve productivity.

Benazir Women Agriculture Workers: This program's focus is on empowering women agricultural workers with access to small agricultural loans and services to incentivize improved productivity. The underlying theory of change is to legally recognize the unpaid women agriculture workers and expand their livelihood opportunities in addition to linkages with government services.

Internship Guarantee: This program is purported for the under-privileged educated rural and urban youth. Public-private partnerships may be harnessed for guaranteed internship to the youth.

Social Protection Policy in Sindh

A well-thought-out Social Protection Policy can be instrumental in not only providing a social safety net for the marginalized groups, but also in developing a pathway for Sindh's impoverished population to transition from the clutches of poverty to self-actualization with productive members of the society. Government can play a crucial role in providing an enabling environment for the segments of population who cannot cope with small economic shocks. The success and sustainability of this strategy rests upon forging multi-sector partnership along cross-cutting themes of food security, nutrition, health, education, employment, women development, empowerment of disabled persons and poverty. This report purports to draw upon lessons from social protection strategies globally that can inform the strategy in Sindh.

What is Social Protection?

Social protection can be defined as protecting and helping those who are poor and vulnerable, such as children, women, older people, people living with disabilities, the displaced, the unemployed, and the sick. However, there are differences in terms of interventions under a broad-based social protection strategy (Harvey et al. 2007).

The overarching objectives of social protection are grounded in four dimensions of:

- protective measure: to provide relief from deprivation
- preventive measure: to avert deprivation
- promotive measure: to enhance real income and capabilities
- transformative measure: to address social equity and exclusion (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004)

The interventions directed towards social protection can be broadly categorized, but not restricted to:

- social assistance: cash transfers, in-kind transfers, public works programs and pensions (Arnold et al. 2011)
- social insurance: contributions by beneficiaries, matching subsidies, formal or informal pooled fund (Barrientos 2010; Norton et al. 2001).
- labor market: policies to promote employment for vulnerable groups, increasing minimum wage and compensation benefits (Barrientos 2010)

In developing countries, the importance of social capital as a form of social protection for the impoverished households cannot be overstated. Kinship ties and close-knit communities are usually the preferred source for the deprived households in time of need, especially in areas where formal institutions have not developed financial inclusion and outreach services.

Global Lessons for Social Protection

The literature review reveals that there is no single way to target poverty and develop safety nets as policy levers in varying contexts for social protection. The interplay of multiple factors entails that a social protection should not be seen in isolation from macro-level policy framework. A one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided at all costs when developing a concrete social protection policy for Sindh.

Under the Internship Guarantee Program, the private sector needs to be involved to stimulate economic growth and generate employment opportunities. Public sector cannot be regarded as the primary source of employment generation for the masses. Government can develop an enabling environment for an eco-system of innovative entrepreneurship for solutions to development challenges facing the province. A comprehensive study on entrepreneurship reviews more than 200 articles that demonstrate the crucial role of entrepreneurship in poverty alleviation (Suttor, Bruton and Chen 2019). The operational definition of entrepreneurship goes beyond small-scale enterprises and encompasses all the enterprises focused on innovative solutions to address local problems. Youth employment program within the social protection strategic framework must focus on fostering entrepreneurship.

Financial sector development is a crucial factor in determining the economic growth and financial access to the entire population along with marginalized segments. A study focusing on both cross-country and country-specific studies sheds light on the crucial role of financial sector development in economic growth which ultimately results in poverty reduction (Zhuang et al. 2009). This finding reflects the importance of financial sector deepening when designing financially viable social protection programs because social welfare spending cannot be divorced from the macro-economic and financial sector realities of the country.

Pakistan's post-devolution context has empowered the provinces with resources and administrative powers to develop poverty reduction and social protection strategies reflective of local realities. However, a study conducted in Mexico revealed simply devolving the powers and resources did not translate into poverty reduction when there were no binding accountability mechanisms at local level (Hernandez-Trillo 2016). Any social protection initiative in Sindh needs to be seen through the lens of post-devolution phase after 18th amendment to the constitution. Institutional arrangements for rigorous accountability mechanisms are pre-requisites to for effective social protection programs.

Community-based development with participatory planning is the cornerstone to poverty alleviation. The evaluation of world's largest community development program in China revealed that the program was able to increase income and consumption of slightly better off households compared to the poorest households (Park and Wang 2010). One important aspect of this program was that outcomes were better for communities with better governance i.e., more educated leaders or better village committees. In essence, the takeaway for poverty eradication is that a series of contextual policies, plans and interventions are of utmost importance to deal with the multi-dimensional problem of poverty. The poverty puzzle in Sindh cannot be solved using a one-dimensional lens with a blanket approach that disregards intra-provincial variations. Community buy-in through social mobilization for planning and execution along with government investment are necessary but not sufficient conditions for poverty eradication. Multi-sectoral planning coupled with requisite institutional arrangements are as important for social protection.

Recent Poverty Trend in Pakistan

Over the last decade, the headcount below poverty line in 2007-8 was 49.7% which declined to 24.3% in 2017-18 (Pakistan Economic Survey 2018). The difference between urban and rural poverty has increased in the last decade from 15% in 2007-08 to 18.2% in 2017-18. In a nutshell, it can be safely said that Pakistan has made more headway in reducing urban poverty compared to that of rural poverty. The urban poverty has declined more rapidly from 32.7% to 12.5% compared to rural poverty which declined from 49.7% to 30.7% in the last decade.

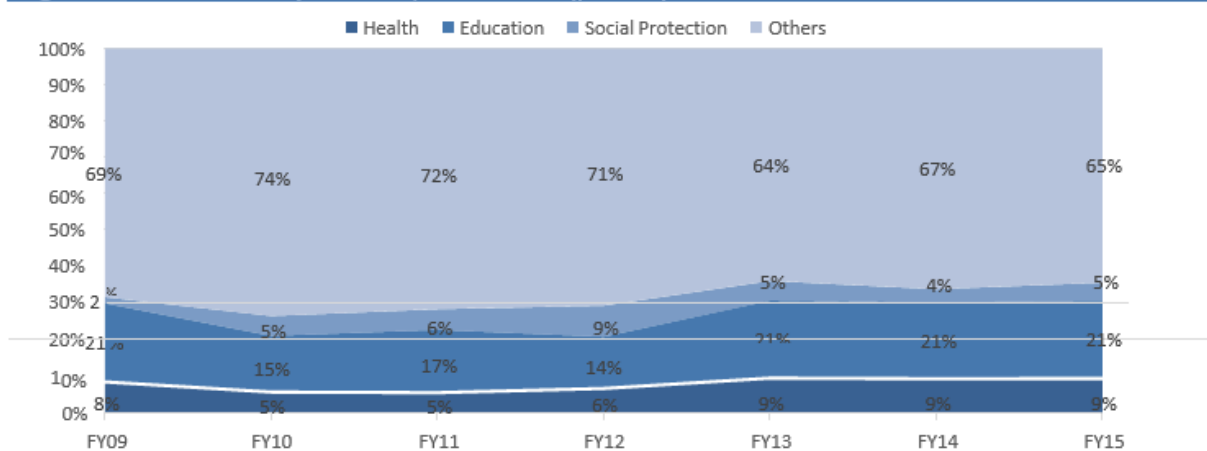
The headcount ratio masks the depth of deprivations along the dimensions of health, education and standard of living. Multi-dimensional poverty index takes into account both the headcount ratio and the depth of deprivations. UNDP's Multi-Dimensional Poverty report on Pakistan indicates that "The MPI dropped from 0.292 in 2004/05 to 0.197 in 2014/15, while the headcount ratio (H) fell by over 16.4 percentage points, from 55.2 percent to 38.8 percent. However, the average deprivation shares of the poor declined relatively little, from 52.9 percent to 50.9 percent" (UNDP Pakistan 2016). This is an important finding which reflects that merely pulling the impoverished above the poverty line does not resolve the problem of poverty. These findings substantiate the case for a well-targeted social protection program that not only reduces the incidence of poverty, but also reduces the deprivations along health, education and standard of living.

Comparing historical trend of poverty in Pakistan with China can provide illustrative reasons as to why China made significant headway in poverty reduction over time. A brief analysis of poverty trend shows that in late 1970s rural poverty rates in China and Pakistan were similar. However, during the next three decades, poverty in China reduced by about 9 times both in rates and numbers in China during the 1978-2005 period, while in Pakistan it fluctuated and did not reduce much in comparison (Arif and Farooq 2012). The disparity in rates of poverty reduction can be attributed to political will, macroeconomic stability and poverty alleviation policies targeted towards promotion of non-rural farm economy, public investment and urbanization. The poverty puzzle is deeply intertwined with social protection which aims to help mitigate the effects of economic shocks on the impoverished population to ultimately break free from the vicious cycle of poverty.

Deconstructing Social Protection in Sindh

It is worth noting that Government of Sindh has a Social Protection Unit housed in its Social Welfare Department to develop, implement and coordinate social protection and poverty reduction initiatives. However, no formal social protection policy is in place that provides an integrated framework to oversee the rollout of social protection programs. In the post-devolution era, a vacuum in policy framework in Sindh entails fragmented interventions to develop social safety nets and reduce poverty. These programs include zakat, livelihood and educational stipends, healthcare assistance, general subsidies, social welfare activities, the Rural Support Program for Poverty Reduction, grants of state land to landless peasants, the Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program (BBSYDP), and the Employees Social Security schemes aimed at mitigating income shocks and reducing vulnerability among the destitute (World Bank 2017). Even though Zakat, Bait-ul-Maal and Benazir Income Support Programs are operating at federal level, the missing institutional linkages with federal government have been a stumbling block in Sindh to catalyze poverty reduction and social protection.

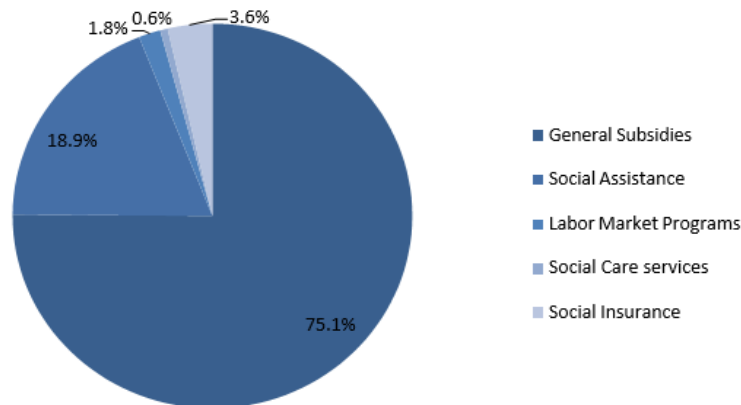
Figure 1: Share of total expenditures, FY09 to FY15 (percent)



Source: Data from Accountant General of Pakistan (as cited in Sindh Public Expenditure Review 2017)

As can be seen from the figure above, the share of self-reported share of social protection expenditures by the government is volatile to say the least. Even though the expenditures have increased in absolute figures, the fluctuating relative share is reflective of the lack of coherent policy framework that informs social protection allocations and expenditures.

Figure 2: Social protection sub-categories of spending in FY16 (percent)



Source: Data from the Government of Sindh (as cited in Sindh Public Expenditure Review 2017)

The figure above further substantiates the argument that reflects ad-hoc social protection framework which is primarily directed towards untargeted general subsidies. There is an urgent need to reorient the social protection spending towards well-directed schemes and cost-effective interventions with proven impact. A well-drafted Social Protection Policy will help develop a coherent framework grounded in allocative and optimal efficiency of the spending.

Institutional Arrangements for Social Protection

While there are a few initiatives to address social protection in Pakistan, the pre-requisite institutional arrangements to help the deprived and enhance socio-economic capabilities across different contexts in Pakistan have been missing. Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) can be termed as the umbrella poverty reduction program that targets poor population, particularly women, in addition to maintaining a socio-economic registry of the target population (Benazir Income Support Programme 2016). In the post-devolution phase after the 18th amendment, provinces have been empowered to take charge of developing institutional mechanisms for social protection and poverty reduction. In Sindh, there are initiatives including zakat and Ushr allowance, merit scholarships to girls, grants of state land to landless peasants, rehabilitating allowance to agriculture subsidies and skills development. However, these initiatives lack a well-directed coherent policy framework for integrated service delivery programs.

Fragmented initiatives are not likely to affect poverty or improve the resilience of impoverished population without a concerted effort that is grounded in institutional reforms. For example, adding pro-poor initiatives on existing departments of education, health or social welfare will not translate into synergies and linkages needed for social protection.

Sustained and well-targeted initiatives can go a long way along with the requisite institutional reforms.

Government of Sindh has rolled out the Union-Council Based Poverty Reduction Program (now called People's Poverty Reduction Program) in 2009-10 on pilot basis in 4 districts to harness social mobilization for assets generation and reducing vulnerabilities. The program will continue in the existing districts and will be expanded to other impoverished districts of Sindh. Similar to UCBPRP, Sindh Union Council and Community Strengthening Program is also being implemented in 8 other districts in Sindh that is predicated on Community Driven Local Development Policy based on social mobilization. The government intends to scale up the People's Poverty Reduction Program to other poverty-stricken districts of Sindh based on the findings of its impact assessment of the program in 4 pilot districts. The program employs multi-pronged interventions including micro-health insurance,

income generation grants, community investment funds, low-cost housing and others.

Even though a multi-pronged approach that builds on inter-sectoral and inter- departmental synergies to target poverty is a crucial step, the focus on developing institutions with core focus on targeting social protection through its determinants and associated indicators is essential. For example, Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index may be used to target specific indicators pertaining to health, education and standard of living. However, for a comprehensive social protection strategy, institutional-level strategies need to be analyzed through the lens of governance issues and policy options thought to be associated with poverty, vulnerability and its correlates.

Deconstructing the various components of Sindh Poverty Reduction Strategy can help generate useful lessons to develop context-based interventions that are well-targeted to achieve intended outcomes. For lasting sustainable solutions to poverty, domestic resources need to be effectively mobilized and the private sector needs to be engaged to foster market-based solutions.

Private Sector: Market-Based Solutions

The problem of poverty cannot be divorced from the private sector which can play an instrumental role in catering to the impoverished populations in Pakistan. From a policy standpoint, there is no strategic plan in place that harmonizes market-based solutions with public sector strategy. Effective engagement of the private sector and businesses for socio- economic development can help develop sustainable solutions to the problem of poverty with economic empowerment of the poor. Public sector strategy needs to facilitate develop an enabling environment for businesses to cater to the dual outcomes of profitability and socio- economic development.

Pakistan can learn a great deal from India's example of leveraging private sector for innovative solutions to the lower income strata of population. Many multi-national enterprises adapted to the local market needs by providing innovative solutions, e.g., sachets of washing powder, to access the bottom pyramid of the population (Prahalad 2006). This is a win-win solution for both the private sector and the impoverished population as the former gains access to a huge market for high volume-small margin-based profit, and the latter gains access to wide variety of products that can catalyze their socio-economic empowerment. Subsequently, such innovative industries and open businesses will help employ local population that is privy to the indigenous consumer needs. Similarly, the public sector can use policy levers to encourage profitable businesses and enterprises to invest a certain portion of their profits in the socio-economic development of the catchment population in which they operate. India has legislated for companies with profits over INR 50 million per annum to earmark at least 2% of its profits for corporate social responsibility (Ernst & Young 2013). Although Pakistan has also engaged a few profitable corporations for improvement in socio-economic development of the catchment population, a broad-based policy framework for effectively engaging private sector for social protection and poverty reduction is missing.

Way Forward for the Government of Sindh

From the perspective of Government of Sindh, the roadmap for social protection policy should be a part and parcel of the Sindh Growth Strategy and aligned with the Sindh Poverty Reduction Strategy and Community Driven Local Development Policy.

The seven thematic pillars identified as priority areas that will be the cornerstone of the Social Protection Policy must be embedded within the socio-economic strategic plan of Pakistan and Sindh. Well-crafted phase wise strategic plan must be grounded in an evidence-based approach that aims to develop missing markets and inter-market linkages to empower the impoverished segments of

population. The pitfalls of pursuing a social protection policy that merely provides relief from short-term economic shocks need to be avoided. The ultimate goal of the policy must be to enhance the income and capabilities of the impoverished segments of population. Cost-effective interventions within each thematic pillar must be piloted first to avoid huge undirected spending that ultimately becomes too costly to sustain.

Broad themes of the social protection agenda can be categorized into poverty reduction, food security, family health, small-scale farmers and youth employment. The rule of thumb for rolling out comprehensive strategies along the aforementioned themes should be enhancing the capabilities of the target segments of population. For example, small-scale and subsistence farmers must be incentivized to enhanced productivity to have disposable income that can both help them cope with both economic shocks and invest in human capital. Food security can be improved in the short-term with subsidies, but the long-term solution lies in enhancing the economic capabilities of the populace to improve purchasing power and standard of living. Family health interventions, especially MNCH, must be centered on promoting healthy behaviors and integrated management particularly pertaining to preventive health. Health and social coverage need to reduce out-of-pocket expenditures on essential services, but the quality-of-service delivery also needs to be improved in tandem. Due to budget constraints, full coverage of health facilities might not be achieved; however, socio-economic registry can be developed to target the impoverished population effectively. Public-private partnerships in the health sector can be harnessed to ensure quality service along with electronic platforms for credible data on coverage and health outcomes.

Youth employment and training programs need to be in line with the industrial needs and growth imperatives of the province. Interventions under the internship guarantee program should not be isolated from labor market demands in terms of requisite skills and competencies. Cost-effective technological solutions need to be incorporated in the program for an integrated platform with rigorous monitoring & evaluation, and course correction based on real time data. Integrated Social Registry Database such as the Benazir Income Support Program can go a long way in developing an evidence-base to quantify the impact of government's investments along the seven thematic pillars. Robust evaluations and analytics based on real-time data can also help ensure transparency in rolling out interventions with timely course corrections.

Eventually, the program needs to harness the economic potential of the impoverished segments to be part and parcel of the economic activities in the province. The long-term vision should steer clear of wasteful welfare spending that breeds aid-dependence with little or no focus on building market synergies or enhancing capabilities of target population.

Existing inter-sectoral programs, like Accelerated Action Plan for Reducing Malnutrition and Stunting, can help provide useful lessons in synergizing efforts and avoiding duplication to achieve common goals. Similarly, the impact assessment of Union-Council Based Poverty Reduction Program (now PPRP) can help generate evidence to inform the specific interventions that can have an amplified impact on social protection and poverty reduction. Eventually, the investments made in the social protection program need to yield results in terms of developing the socio-economic capabilities to the marginalized segments to contribute to the economic growth of Sindh. Hence, creating market linkages to foster private sector involvement is essential in catalyzing economic activities in the catchment areas. The overall social protection strategy should not be divorced from the existing institutional structures and programs. The focus must be on graduation of the targeted segments from poverty and breaking the cycle of inter-generation poverty. The social safety nets should ultimately lead to a resilient and productive population that can cope with economic shocks.

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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