

Innovative SMEs Flourish Under the GRASP Initiative



Two pioneering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from Balochistan, YASA Agri and Livestock Farm in Khuzdar and Al-Khair Corrugated Carton Factory in Quetta, have achieved a significant milestone in industrial innovation. Both SMEs received a PKR 30 million matching grant under the EU-funded GRASP project to enhance their operations and contribute to the local economy.

YASA Agri and Livestock Farm proudly launched the region's first onion frying and dehydration unit. The grant facilitated the establishment of a Cold Storage and Onion Processing Unit, effectively addressing critical supply chain challenges and ensuring fresher produce while bolstering the local agricultural economy.

Meanwhile, Al-Khair Corrugated Carton Factory became the first carton manufacturing unit in the area to utilise recyclable paper. The matching grant enabled the import of advanced machinery from China and Germany, previously unattainable. This innovative venture not only meets the increasing market demand sustainably but is also creating multiple employment opportunities for local residents.

The inauguration ceremonies were attended by key stakeholders, including Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman, Prime Minister's Youth Programme; Sardarzada Gurgain Jan Mengal; and officials from the International Trade Centre, the State Bank of Pakistan, and local chambers of commerce. Also present were PPAF CEO Nadir Gul Barech and the CEOs of PPAF's partner organisations—Balochistan Rural Support Programme and Taraqee Foundation—who, along with the chief guests, emphasised the importance of collaboration in driving the success of the GRASP initiative for sustainable economic growth and improved community livelihoods.



A New Beginning for Afghan DAFI Scholars

In a significant milestone, stakeholders including UNHCR, PPAF, the National Science and Technology Park (NSTP), the Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences) in Peshawar, and IDEA came together to celebrate the graduation of Afghan DAFI scholars under the UNHCR-funded Poverty Graduation Programme (PGP). This programme, funded by UNHCR, is led by PPAF and is implemented by IDEA.

As part of the PGP, 90 Afghan DAFI scholars participated in a four-month Start-up Support and Entrepreneurial Skills Training Programme at well-established institutes across Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta, jointly selected by PPAF and IDEA. In Islamabad, 30 scholars trained at NSTP showcased their innovative ventures on graduation day and were awarded PKR 400,000 each in seed funding to launch or expand their businesses.

In Quetta and Peshawar, similar graduation events celebrated the achievements of an additional 60 scholars, including 15 women. Participants trained at NSTP Quetta Campus and IMSciences Peshawar also received PKR 400,000 each in seed funding and certificates recognising their accomplishments. Key stakeholders, including the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees and officials from IDEA, UNHCR, and PPAF, praised the programme’s holistic approach to empowering refugee communities.

This collaborative effort has equipped Afghan refugees with vital entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to establish sustainable businesses, create jobs, and tackle immediate economic challenges while laying the groundwork for long-term resilience and community development.



Renewable Energy to Off-Grid Communities in Upper Dir

PPAF is committed to addressing energy challenges in off-grid communities, bringing sustainable solutions to remote mountainous areas. A 200-kilowatt micro-hydro power project was inaugurated in Bela village, Union Council Gwaldai, District Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to provide electricity to approximately 2,400 residents for the first time. Launched in May 2022 with financial support from PPAF and implemented by the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), the project fulfills critical energy needs, particularly during the harsh winter months.

The inauguration ceremony brought together key political and administrative leaders, including MNA Sahibzada Sibghatullah, MPA Malik Gul Ibrahim, Deputy Commissioner Mr. Naveed Akbar, and local community members. Political leaders at the event stressed the need to replicate such initiatives in neighboring areas to address energy challenges in other underserved communities. Mr. Arshad Rashid, PPAF's Chief Programmes, highlighted the vital role of development initiatives in empowering communities and driving long-term progress while Mr. Masood ul Mulk, CEO, SRSP, highlighted the importance of robust governance mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of such projects.

In addition to this project, a similar 200-kilowatt micro-hydro power initiative funded by KfW and led by PPAF is now supplying electricity to over 5,500 residents across four villages in the same region. This reliable energy supply has enabled households to benefit from consistent lighting and is empowering small businesses with the energy needed to expand and thrive.



PPAF Achieves Recognition in Olive Value Chain Success



PPAF achieved a remarkable milestone at the 2nd Grand National Olive Gala, organised by the Ministry of National Food Security & Research in Islamabad. Competing against 71 stakeholders, PPAF was honoured as the Best Organisation Contributing to the Promotion of the Olive Value Chain.

Adding to this achievement, PPAF's Olive Oil Processing Plant (OPP) in Lower Dir secured the award for Best Management and Processing of Olive Oil among 27 olive mills across the country. The state-of-the-art facility was established under the Government of Italy's Programme for Poverty Reduction, which was led by PPAF and locally implemented by SRSP. The award celebrates the plant's exemplary operational standards and its pivotal role in enhancing the quality and efficiency of olive oil production in the region.

PPAF's efforts to boost olive culture since 2016 in the potential districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have created opportunities for local farmers to enhance their livelihoods through improved cultivation practices, value addition, and better market access.



Partnerships for Boosting Livelihoods in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan

PPAF is funding transformative initiatives that address critical needs such as food security, disaster risk reduction, renewable energy, and economic empowerment in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Through partnerships with the Hamza Development Foundation (HDF) and the Basic Education Reforms & Development Foundation (BERD) under the Azad Jammu & Kashmir Local Area Development Programme, 6,000 households in the Hattian Bala, Haveli, and Neelum districts will benefit. This initiative prioritises climate-smart agriculture for food security, equips youth and persons with disabilities with essential livelihood skills, and reduces disaster risks through afforestation and strategic land use planning. Additionally, the introduction of off-grid solar power will lessen reliance on fossil fuels, paving the way for cleaner, sustainable energy solutions.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, PPAF's funding supports collaboration with the Hashoo Foundation, impacting 12,849 households in Chilas, Diamir district. The programme focuses on advancing ecosystem management, enhancing governance, and equipping communities with tools to foster economic sustainability while promoting renewable energy for green growth.

Both these initiatives aim to build a sustainable future and improve the quality of life for thousands of households in AJK and GB.



Empowering Young Women through Skill Development in Balochistan

Girl students from diverse religious backgrounds recently celebrated the completion of a three-month Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme conducted by ICON under the Bridging Educational Polarisation for Social Harmony project in Balochistan. Funded by PPAF and implemented by the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP), the initiative aims to foster social cohesion and enhance opportunities for marginalised youth.

A Certificate Award Ceremony for 20 female graduates was held at the ICON Institute in Quetta, marking their remarkable achievements in marketable skills such as beautician techniques, tailoring, and basic computer training. The graduates received toolkits to support their professional journey, including laptops, tailoring kits, and beautician kits, tailored to their respective fields of training. This event was graced by Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme who was joined by CEO, PPAF and senior officials from BRSP, BTEVTA and ICON.

In addition, 80 male students enrolled in the project completed training as electrical technicians and in skills such as solar panel repair, e-commerce, motorcycle repair, mobile repair, and basic computer courses, further enhancing their employability in the job market



Building Bridges for Social Cohesion



As part of its commitment to fostering social cohesion, PPAF has been actively supporting events that bring together diverse communities to promote inclusivity and harmony.

In Quetta, Balochistan, PPAF supported a seminar on Interfaith Harmony and Festive Christmas Celebrations at the Methodist Church. The event, organised in collaboration with the Center for Peace and Development and minority groups, emphasised tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect among different faiths. Chairman PMYP, Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, and PPAF CEO, Nadir Gul Barech, attended the seminar, which brought together leaders from various religious and community groups. Speakers highlighted the importance of building connections and fostering positive relationships to strengthen the social fabric.

Similarly, in Tharparkar, Sindh, PPAF-supported Baanhn Beli Schools celebrated Diwali in a region known as "Aman Ki Dharti" (The Land of Peace), where Hindus form the majority population. The event brought together dignitaries, including the Assistant Commissioner, Nagarparkar, Mr. Imran Khan, former advisor to the Chief Minister Sindh on Human Rights, Mr. Veerji Mal Kohli, and Chairman Union Council Adhigam, Sathi Somji Kohli. Local villagers from both Hindu and Muslim communities joined elected representatives and School Management Committee members to celebrate Diwali. The event fostered mutual respect and strengthened bonds between communities promoting inclusivity and social harmony.



Roshan Raahein Raises Awareness on Gender-Based Violence

To mark the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Campaign, spanning November 25 to December 10, PPAF launched a special 7-part radio series, Roshan Raahein, to highlight efforts in addressing GBV and empowering women. The series broadcast on Radio Pakistan's FM 101 and Medium Wave channels reached urban and rural audiences with impactful messages on GBV prevention, resilience, and inclusive solutions to gender inequality.

Each 20-minute episode featured expert discussions on topics such as legal protections, financial empowerment, mental health, cyber security, and community-driven approaches to GBV prevention. Adding a personal touch, the series included inspiring stories of women who, with PPAF's support, overcame challenges and are now driving positive change in their households and communities.



Sadaf Rani
Host



Yusra Gilani
Guest



Waiza Rafique
Guest



Imrana Komal
Guest



Dr. Muhammad Rizwan
Guest



Sohail Khan Bangash
Guest

Catch all episodes here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS5hblfyX77Jx1bAxneQrrexw-5-9U0Vx>

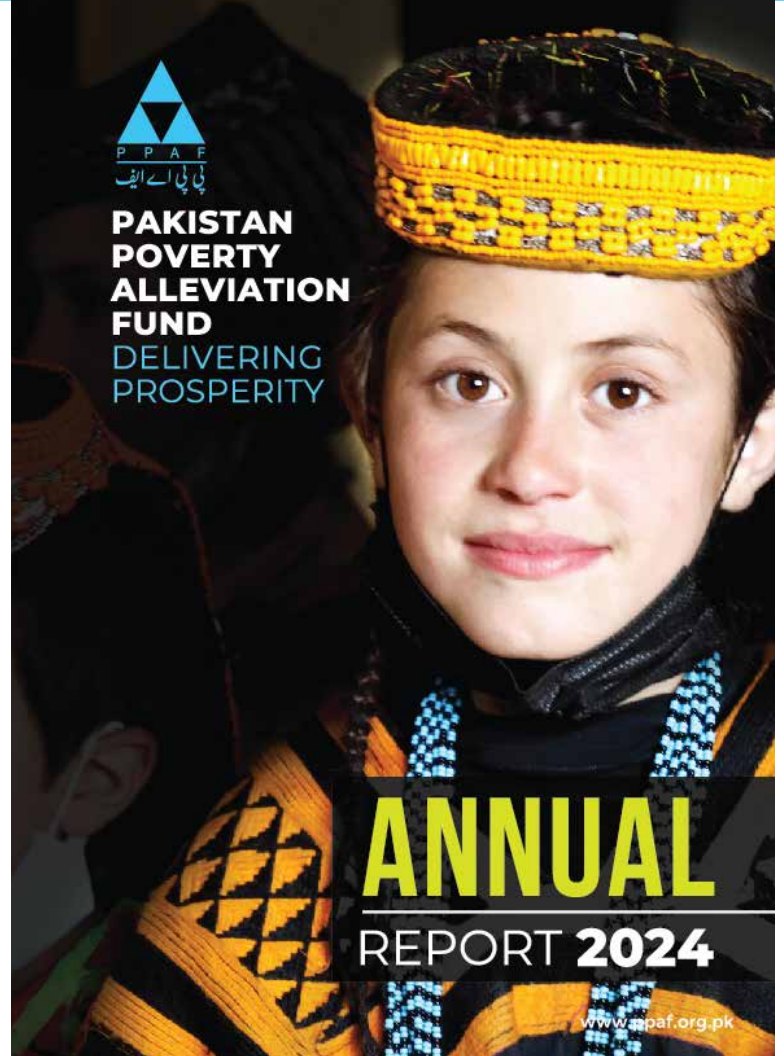


PPAF Releases Annual Report 2023-24

The PPAF Annual Report for FY 2023-24 is now available online for readers. The Report offers a detailed narrative of the organisation's achievements, challenges, and forward-looking strategies reflecting on the milestones achieved and the hurdles overcome during the year. Key focus areas are explored, including community empowerment, climate change resilience, disaster preparedness, livelihoods enhancement, financial inclusion, and infrastructure development. Highlights also include progress in renewable energy, education, and health initiatives, showcasing PPAF's integrated approach to improving lives at the grassroots.

Explore further at:

<https://www.ppaf.org.pk/doc/PPAF%20Annual%20Report%202024.pdf>



Stories From the Field

Women Lead Road to Connectivity in DI Khan

In Pakistan rural women often travel on foot for agricultural work, market visits, and household chores, frequently carrying heavy loads. In Village Mahra, Dera Ismail Khan, the lack of proper roads isolated 650 households, making it difficult for children to access schools, farmers to reach markets, and patients to obtain medical care. Women bore the brunt of mobility challenges, fetching fodder, firewood, and water, compounded by household responsibilities. The situation worsened when the 2022 floods destroyed the earthen road, leaving the community disconnected.

Taking charge of their future, the women of the village seized the opportunity to drive change. Through the LACIP-II programme, funded by KfW and led by PPAF, the

Women Village Organization (WVO) Roshni prioritised the construction of a link road in their Village Development Plan (VDP). With on-ground support from SRSP, PPAF's implementing partner, the Rs. 17 million project was completed in just seven months, transforming connectivity for over 5,000 residents and opening doors to new opportunities for growth and development.

This initiative has not only resolved the mobility crisis but also highlighted the power of women's leadership in institutions, fostering empowerment and trust within the community. The new road has transformed lives, enabling access to schools, markets, and healthcare, and symbolising a brighter future for Mahra.



Stories From the Field

Woman from Sindh Transforms Family's Fortunes with Interest Free Loan

Wajiha Khatoon Jatoi, a determined woman from Sachal Jatoi village in Sindh, transformed her family's struggles into a story of success through resilience and resourcefulness.

Living on her husband Muhammad Younis's modest daily income of PKR 700, Wajiha sought a way to improve their situation. She found support through the Prime Minister's Interest-Free Loan (PMIFL) programme, which provided her with an interest free loan of PKR 40,000.

With PKR 15,000, she purchased a sewing machine to launch a tailoring business and invested the remaining amount in materials to expand into embroidery. Her hard work paid off, earning her PKR 1,000 daily. Building on this

success, Wajiha saved enough to buy a buffalo, which now generates an additional PKR 1,400-1,500 daily income through milk sales.

Today, Wajiha's combined earnings of PKR 2,400-2,500 per day enable her family to enjoy nutritious meals and provide better educational opportunities for their children. Her remarkable journey from hardship to prosperity exemplifies the power of determination and self-empowerment.

The PMIFL programme, led by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and implemented locally by its partner organisations, continues to support individuals like Wajiha in unlocking their potential and achieving sustainable livelihoods.



Stories From the Field

A Journey of Livelihood Resilience in Uthal

Saifullah, a resident of Musa Channa village in Uthal, Balochistan, has defied the odds despite living with physical disabilities since birth. Determined to overcome challenges, he pursued school education and upheld his family's tradition of goat farming.

However, his limited financial means and lack of community support made it difficult to manage his livestock, which often suffered from disease, poor nutrition, and exposure to harsh weather.

A turning point came when Saifullah learned about the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) offering financial grants through the European Union-funded Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) project. He applied and successfully

secured a PKR 0.5 million matching grant.

With this grant, Saifullah constructed a proper shed for his goats, significantly improving their living conditions and reducing losses caused by disease and inadequate shelter. He also received hands on training to care for livestock health. This investment not only stabilised his farming operations but also allowed him to expand his herd, paving the way for future growth.

Saifullah's story highlights the transformative impact of targeted support on rural livelihoods and resilience.

GRASP is being implemented by International Trade Centre in partnership with Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, FAO Pakistan and SMEDA Pakistan.

