International Trade Centre

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PAKISTAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION FUND

Project Completion Report

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PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

BRSP

SPO Strengthening Participatory Organization

Gothseengar FOUNDATION

RDF

SAFWCO

THARDEEP RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TRDP

Acronyms and Abbreviations

A2F	Access to Finance
ABSPs	Agribusiness Service Providers
AC	Advisory Committee
BRSP	Balochistan Rural Support Programme
BSO	Business Support Organization
CABI	Center for Agriculture and Bioscience International
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
FCBS	Farmer Climate Business School
FMC	Farmers Marketing Collective
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GoP	Government of Pakistan
GRASP	Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress
GSF	Goth Seengar Foundation
ITC	International Trade Centre
KIBOR	Karachi Interbank Offered Rate
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFB	Micro Finance Bank
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MG	Matching Grants
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty index
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMIC	Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PO	Partner Organization
PPAF	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
PPD	Public–Private Dialogue
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RDF	Research and Development Foundation
SAFWCO	Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SECP	Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SPO	Strengthening Participatory Organization
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
SUCCESS	Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support

TDAP	Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
TF	Taraqee Foundation
ToT	Training of Trainers
TRDP	Thardeep Rural Development Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UC	Union Council
UN	United Nations
UVAS	University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences
VC	Valuechain

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Annexes

1. Executive Summary

This Project Completion Report presents the consolidated results, achievements, and lessons learned from the Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) project, with a specific focus on the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) component implemented from April 2021 to November 2025. Funded by the European Union and led by the International Trade Centre (ITC), GRASP aimed to promote inclusive, climate-resilient, and market-oriented rural economic growth in Sindh and Balochistan. Within this multi-partner framework including FAO and SMEDA, PPAF played a foundational, cross-cutting, and catalytic role in rural and business mobilization, access to finance, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

PPAF's contribution went far beyond activity delivery; it created the enabling infrastructure, systems, and field presence that allowed GRASP to operate effectively across 22 districts and 11 priority value chains. Through its seven Partner Organizations (POs), PPAF mobilized and profiled 45,726 SMEs and primary producers (37% women), building a comprehensive digital SME database that became the backbone for all partner interventions, training, matching grants, financial linkages, exposure, and market development. This business-oriented mobilization approach helped SMEs overcome barriers related to informality, limited market exposure, and weak financial literacy, preparing them for investment, compliance, and value-chain participation.

Under Access to Finance (A2F), PPAF facilitated transformative financial inclusion in an adverse macroeconomic environment. A total of **520 SMEs accessed USD 4.01 million in formal loans**, while **399 SMEs received USD 5.26 million in matching grants**, surpassing the original target of 269 grants due to exchange gains and additional allocations. Notably, **80% of grantees adopted climate-smart and environmentally sustainable technologies**, exceeding the 30% target. Women-led SMEs accounted for **37% of all grants** and **41% of loan recipients**, reflecting strong gender-responsive mobilization and financial facilitation. Value-chain-wise investments were distributed across dates, mango, onion, tomato, banana, grape, olive, cattle, goat, sheep, and poultry, demonstrating broad sectoral transformation.

PPAF's leadership in M&E ensured rigorous, credible, and timely progress tracking. Through the GRASP MIS, designed and operationalized by PPAF project data was standardized, verified, and reported across all partners. Two rounds of large-scale outcome surveys generated **21,419 validated responses**, enabling evidence-based reporting against six of the seven outcome-level indicators. The M&E system strengthened accountability, learning, and decision-making, while extensive data validation corrected legacy inconsistencies and strengthened audit readiness.

Among matching grant recipients, **sales turnover increased by 53% on average** (64% for women-led SMEs), and **investment increased by 68%** (86% for women). A total of **3,079 full-time equivalent jobs** and **3,228 seasonal jobs** were created or sustained, with strong participation of women and youth. Across all GRASP beneficiaries reached through the outcome survey, total investment increased by 35%, sales turnover by 56%, and 39,906 FTE jobs were supported. Increases were highest in goat, poultry, and cattle value chains.

A key operational achievement was GRASP's response to the 2022 floods, where PPAF distributed **675,000 kg of certified wheat seed to 13,500 affected farmers** in Balochistan, restoring winter cropping and supporting food security.

Gender and social inclusion remained central throughout implementation. GRASP engaged women SMEs /primary producer for different activities; 3,037 women in training; 2,884 women in market linkage events; and 409 women in business formalization with FBR/SECP/chambers. Women's participation was strongest in livestock value chains particularly cattle, goat, and poultry where women received more than half of the grants in several chains. Targeted SheTrades, gender sensitization, and community engagement further strengthened women's decision-making, market access, and enterprise visibility.

Environmental sustainability was embedded across interventions. Through grants and financial linkages, SMEs invested in solar energy, water-efficient irrigation, climate-resilient livestock housing, improved post-harvest systems, and low-emission processing technologies. Beyond grants, the project piloted horticulture land insurance for SMEs, providing a climate-resilience safety net.

Communication and visibility reached unprecedented scale, with over **60 million people** reached across digital and traditional media, 213 social media posts, 433 media placements, high-level events, radio campaigns, documentaries, and international exhibitions. GRASP's results gained national and global recognition, including showcases at COP27, SME expos, and international trade fairs.

Financially, PPAF demonstrated strong discipline and efficient budget utilization. After a late-project budget adjustment, **99% of the revised budget was utilized**, reflecting effective planning and adaptive resource management.

Key lessons from GRASP highlight the effectiveness of an SME-centred, value-chain approach combining grants, finance, capacity building, and market linkages. The project demonstrated the importance of local partner organizations, structured M&E systems, simplified grant processes, blended finance, and climate-smart innovation. It also highlighted the need for sustained mentoring, targeted products for women and small producers, continued market linkages, and government adoption of GRASP models to ensure longer-term sustainability.

Several post-project challenges remain, including climate and economic volatility, limited policy uptake, HR attrition, and the need for ongoing financial and technical support for SMEs especially late-cycle grantees. However, the systems, capacities, SME database, institutional learning, and behavioural shifts established under GRASP provide a strong foundation for sustained impact.

Overall, PPAF's component proved to be a cornerstone of GRASP's success. By integrating mobilization, finance, and rigorous M&E, PPAF helped transform rural SMEs into more competitive, resilient, and investment-ready enterprises. The results demonstrate that GRASP's integrated, locally grounded model is scalable, cost-effective, and highly relevant for inclusive rural economic development in Pakistan.

2. Project Overview and Context

2.1 Project Context, Development Objectives and Design

PPAF recognizes poverty as a complex and multi-dimensional challenge, where the right to a life of dignity is determined not solely by income, but by equitable access to education, health, safe drinking water, connectivity, and sustainable livelihoods. PPAF also acknowledges that structural factors such as gender, caste, class, ethnicity, region, and religion and the intersections among them shape individuals' vulnerabilities and influence their capacity to escape poverty.

In response to this complexity, PPAF does not advocate for a uniform or prescriptive poverty reduction model. Instead, its **Theory of Change** is grounded in the conviction that **building and nurturing value-based, people-centered institutions** is fundamental to empowering marginalized communities and amplifying their collective voice. Within this framework, **social capital** functions as a key multiplier, reinforcing inclusion, participation, and sustainable development outcomes.

The **Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)** project was designed in alignment with this approach. It seeks to reduce poverty by developing and strengthening rural micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across Sindh and Balochistan. The project aimed to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by improving the productivity, profitability, and market linkages of enterprises engaged in primary production, service delivery, and value addition within targeted production clusters.

Anchored in PPAF's poverty graduation model, GRASP integrates a sequenced approach comprising consumption support, skills enhancement, asset transfer, savings mobilization, and access to microfinance, culminating in graduation to sustainable livelihoods. Through this holistic model, the project has contributed to the creation of gender-inclusive employment and income-generating opportunities in rural communities.

GRASP directly aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, contributing to the achievement of SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Its design emphasizes gender equity, environmental sustainability, and resilience to climate and economic shocks as integral to inclusive rural development.

Implemented under the European Union's focal sector "Rural Development" within the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Pakistan 2014–2020, the project incorporated several key components managed by PPAF:

- **Rural Mobilization:** Community engagement, beneficiary identification, and facilitation of inclusive participation.
- **Access to Finance:** Development of tailored financial instruments to enhance SME creditworthiness and expand access to finance.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Continuous oversight of performance through standardized tools and an integrated Management Information System (MIS).

Within the partnership framework, PPAF provided technical leadership in access to finance and M&E and coordinated with implementing partners including the International Trade Centre (ITC), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), working through local sub-grantees for field-level implementation.

Specific Objectives / Outcomes:

The specific objective of the GRASP is to enhance productivity, profitability and sustainability of men and women owned Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) involved in primary production, service provision and value addition in and around selected clusters of production within the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh. The GRASP project was designed to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth in targeted areas of Sindh and Balochistan by enhancing the productivity, profitability, and resilience of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged in horticulture and livestock value chains. Specifically, the project sought to:

- Strengthen rural SMEs through improved access to finance, markets, and business development services.
- Promote the adoption of **climate-smart, environmentally sustainable, and gender-inclusive practices** in agricultural production and processing.
- Support the formulation and implementation of **agribusiness and business environment-related policies** that enhance SME competitiveness and sustainability.
- Facilitate the integration of rural SMEs into **national and international value chains**, thereby expanding market opportunities and improving income levels.
- Generate **employment and livelihood opportunities**, particularly for women and youth, through targeted interventions across selected value chains.
- Contribute to the **reduction of multidimensional poverty** and the achievement of key **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, and 13)** by fostering equitable, climate-resilient, and inclusive rural development.

2.2 Project Beneficiaries

The GRASP project engaged a wide range of stakeholders across the agricultural and market ecosystem. Its beneficiaries included **value chain actors** such as input suppliers, farmers and producers, traders and wholesalers, middlemen, collectors, mandi owners, roadside vendors, retailers and supermarkets, restaurants and hotels, processors and manufacturers, and exporters/importers. It also supported **market players**, including Agri Business support Providers (ABSPs), Business Intermediary Organizations (BIOs), technical service providers, TVET institutions, marketing and media firms, product development companies, tools and equipment suppliers, transporters, repair and maintenance service providers, packing and packaging companies, agro-vets/agro-veterinary suppliers, and crop protection companies/dealers. Additionally, the project engaged **enabling environment institutions**—government ministries, agriculture and livestock departments, export/food certification offices, trade associations and unions, Financial Institutions (Commercial banks, MFBs and MFIs and Insurance Companies), farmers/Hari associations, chambers of commerce and industry, NGOs/CSOs, and donors. Beyond these, GRASP served local communities and consumers, with direct involvement from FCBS and FMCs as integral participants in the initiative.

2.3 Implementation Partners / Stakeholders

The GRASP project was implemented under the overall technical leadership and grant management of the International Trade Centre (ITC), which served as the principal contracting entity responsible for coordination, strategic direction, and technical oversight. Project implementation was carried out through three sub-contracted entities: the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), each assigned distinct and complementary mandates.

PPAF was sub-contracted to implement Rural Mobilization, Access to Finance, and Monitoring and Evaluation functions. For field-level execution of its mandate, PPAF engaged Partner Organizations (POs) to operate in the targeted districts. In Sindh, these included:

1. Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organization (SAFWCO),
2. Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP),
3. Rural Development Foundation (RDF), and
4. Goth Seengar Foundation (GSF)

while in Balochistan, implementation support was provided by:

1. Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP),
2. Taraqee Foundation (TF), and
3. Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO).

These organizations were responsible for on-ground delivery, beneficiary identification, enterprise support, and facilitation of project activities at the community and enterprise levels. This implementation modality ensured effective operationalization of GRASP interventions, combining international technical oversight with national systems and localized delivery mechanisms, while maintaining clear accountability, consistency, and reach across Sindh and Balochistan.

2.4 Risk Mitigation and Adaptive Implementation Approaches

PPAF mitigated implementation risks in Sindh and Balochistan through a localized, Partner Organization (PO) led delivery approach, complemented by rigorous monitoring, regular follow-ups, grievance redressal and structured mentoring mechanisms jointly undertaken by project partners. This approach was further strengthened through coordination with financial institutions and other enabling environment actors. Leveraging the deep grassroots presence and contextual understanding of POs enabled context-specific planning, adaptive implementation, and continuity of activities, particularly in districts affected by security constraints, market volatility, climate risks, and limited access to finance.

Operational risks were addressed through decentralized management approach and hands-on support by POs, allowing timelines and engagement modalities to be adjusted based on local realities. In Balochistan, where access and mobility risks were higher, POs applied flexible scheduling, cluster-based engagement, and consolidated processes, while in Sindh stronger market connectivity enabled more frequent follow-ups and coordination with financial institutions.

Financial risks were mitigated through mandatory SME co-investment, in cash and in-kind resources alongside matching grants. These contributions including own cash, land, buildings, machinery, equipment, labor, and working capital ensured strong ownership, shared risk, and reduced grant dependency, while serving as a practical test of business commitment and viability. For higher-value grants, a reimbursement-based disbursement model further strengthened controls by releasing funds only after SMEs had invested their own resources and milestones were verified.

Risk mitigation was reinforced through rigorous monitoring, regular follow-ups, and mentoring by POs, with oversight from PPAF and technical backstopping by ITC. This included periodic site visits, verification of expenditures and milestones, business performance tracking, and tailored mentoring to address operational, financial, and market challenges. Continuous coordination among PPAF and POs enabled timely corrective actions and adaptive adjustments to implementation.

Collectively, this localized, partnership-driven, and closely monitored approach ensured prudent use of funds, strengthened SME capacity, and sustained delivery of results across both provinces, despite a challenging operating environment.

3. GRASP PPAF: Targets vs Achievements

The GRASP project logframe (Revised 2024; Annex-I) forms the basis for analysis and presentation of achievements /result numbers for Output indicators relevant to PPAF and where PPAF has supported and coordinated with other project partners in achieving Outcomes and their respective Output /results' numbers.

The following table highlights the PPAF "Access to Finance" /program component indicators, which as a result of GRASP logframe updating in 2023/2024 led by EU results review team, got reduced to 04 from a total of 09 (previous logframe) indicators, however capturing the essence of indicators in old logframe. The table also shows PPAF achievements against the indicator targets *(discussed in detail in relevant sections*) and which of the indicators from old logframe are linked /feeding into respective new indicators. The overall output target numbers remained the same between both versions of logframe. It must be noted that in response to the floods in 2022, the old logframe was updated to include an additional sub-output 2.5 to cover one time response to then flood affected primary producers. This output, however, was not included in the updated logframe but has been included in Table 2 of this report for reference.

Table 1: Access to Finance Indicators and Targets

Output 1.4	A2F Indicators (Revised Logframe)	Linked Indicators from Previous Logframe	Target	PPAF Achievement
Increased access to finance for the target SMEs, with a focus on environmentally sustainable technologies	1.4.1. Number of financial institutions (banks, MFBs and MFIs) with whom collaborations have been made on appropriate financial products and services	3.5.1. Number of Financial Institutions (FIs) (banks, MFBs and MFIs) assisted to develop appropriate products and services for SMEs	20	24
		3.5.3. Number of FIs assisted to provide credit guarantee schemes	05	13
		3.5.4 Number of FIs with whom collaboration has been made for offering financing for SMEs including environmentally sustainable technologies	02	24
	1.4.2. Number of SMEs with improved skills in financial literacy and business planning (disaggregated by sex of owner, sector and province)	3.6.1 Number of SMEs supported to improve financial literacy and business planning)	500	1,091
	1.4.3. Number of SMEs with access to financial services with EU support (disaggregated by sex of owner, sector and province)	3.6.2. Number of SMEs linked to relevant funding sources (by gender of owner)	200	520
		3.6.3. Number of SMEs provided with matching grants in combination with lending (by gender of owner)	50	35
	1.4.4. Amount in USD provided through matching grants to eligible SMEs (disaggregated by sex,	3.5.2. Amount in USD provided through matching grants to eligible SMEs	USD 05 million	USD 5.2 Million

	sector, value chain and province)			

Table 2: Sub-Output 2.5 & Respective Indicators

Output	Indicators (Old Logframe)	Target	PPAF Achievement
Output 2.5 (Flood contingency plan) **Farmers affected by flood received input support through contingency fund**	2.5.1 Amount of wheat seeds distributed through the contingency plan	675,000 KG	675,000 KG
	2.5.2 Number of people receiving inputs with EU funding through the contingency plan in Pishin, Zhob, Panjgur and District Kech (disaggregated by gender).	13,500	13,500

A significant achievement of PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS team has been ability to track and collect feedback through PPAF PO teams by employing online CABI tool and use of smartphones through two rounds of data collection (April 2024 and July/August 2025). From over 25,000 beneficiary primary producers /SMEs responses were collected across all target districts and value chains. In-access of 21,000 collected responses were further analyzed to help present findings /achieved numbers against six of the total seven GRASP Outcome level indicators. The results from the first round of outcome tracking have been formally reported to EU through the annual progress report. The same tracking data is available in GRASP MIS and results against key indicators are highlighted through a dedicated dashboard. The second-round data was reviewed and cleaned by PPAF M&E, MIS and respective PO teams and handed over to ITC M&E team for further analysis and reporting. The results /formal report once shared by ITC will also be added to the MIS dashboard.

The following Table 03 includes the performance of GRASP MG beneficiary SMEs (against the Outcome level indicator targets) precipitated from the grants tracking exercise undertaken by PPAF GRASP M&E team with support of POs in late November 2025 where 394 MG beneficiary SMEs out of the total 399 were reached.

For Outcome indicator 1.2 the performance of MG beneficiaries has been presented against the total number of grants given i.e. 399 as complete dataset and records (MG agreement, field monitoring, milestone completion reports) are available.

For other indicators, at the time of mentioned tracking some of the Cycle IV SMEs were still in implementation phase of approved business plan or had recently completed and hence the many positive results[1] discussed here will improve with time as the completed business plans (infrastructure, equipment and machinery etc.) mature and SMEs move into optimum use of GRASP support.

[1] The most recent (November 2025) Grants Tracking report is attached as Annex VII for detailed insight to performance of the MG beneficiary SMEs w.r.t. key Outcomes indicators of GRASP.

Table 3: Outcome Level Progress – MG Beneficiaries

Outcome	Indicators	PPAF MG Beneficiaries' Performance against Outcome Indicators
Outcome 1: Enhanced productivity, profitability and sustainability of men and women owned Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) involved in primary production, service provision and value addition in and around selected clusters of production within the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh	1.2. Number of SMEs including primary producers applying cleaner production and climate smart agriculture and livestock technologies and practices[2]. (disaggregated by sex, sector, value chain and province)	**319 (80%) SMEs** (including 112 Women, 01 Transgender) out of total 399 MG beneficiary SMEs applying cleaner, CSA/L technologies. **Sector:** Horticulture: 137 (24 Women) i.e. (85%) of total 161 MG SMEs are applying clean /CSA Technologies Livestock: 182 (88 Women, 01 Transgender) i.e. 76% of total 238 MG SMEs are applying Clean /CSL Technologies **Value Chain:** SMEs which are applying Clean, CSA/L technology in different valuechains; Date: 37 (04 Women) Banana: 16 (02 Women) Mango: 14 (10 Women) Onion: 36 (04 Women) Tomato: 09 (02 Women) Grapes: 19 (01 Woman) Olive: 06 (01 Woman) Cattle: 75 (41 Women) Goat: 53 (26 Women, 01 Transgender) Sheep: 32 (11 Women) Poultry: 22 (10 Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: 161 (41 Women) i.e. 77% out of total 208 MG SMEs applying Clean /CSA&L Technologies Sindh: 158 (71 Women, 01 Transgender) i.e. 83% out of total 191 MG SMEs applying Clean /CSA&L Technologies
	1.3 Number of SMEs having transacted business as part of national or	**394 SMEs** (145 women and 01 Transgender) i.e. 100% of the

[1] Application of climate smart agriculture, good agricultural practices, value addition, SPS are contributing to cleaner production practices and post-harvest losses.

	international value chains (gender-disaggregated) (ITC C3/C4)	tracked MG SMEs made business transactions.
	1.4. Percentage increase in sales turnover of supported SMEs in selected value chains (disaggregated by sex, sector, value chain and province)	**53% increase** in sales turnover (On average 64% increase for women owned /led SMEs, 53% for men and 60% for the only transgender MG beneficiary) **Sector:** Horticulture: 34% sales turnover increase Livestock: 39% sales turnover increase **Value Chain:** Date: 47% (53% increase for Women) Banana: 52% (106% increase for Women) Mango: 28% (18 % increase for Women) Onion: 52% (49% increase for Women) Tomato: 80% (62% increase for Women) Grapes: 62% (186% increase for Women) Olive: 67% (14% increase for Women) Cattel: 82% (103% increase for Women) Goat: 45% (72% increase for Women) Sheep: 77% (190% increase for Women) Poultry: 67% (78% increase for Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: 47% increase in sales turnover Sindh: 55% increase in sales turnover
	1.5 Number of full time equivalent (FTE) jobs supported/ sustained in the targeted SMEs (disaggregated by age, sex, sector, value chain and province)	**No. of FTE Jobs:** 3,079 (1,162 Women, 15 Transgender) FTE, 3,228 (1,364 Women, 14 Transgender) Seasonal Jobs **Sector:** Horticulture 4,974 (2,028 Women, 24 Transgender) Livestock: 1,333 (498 Women, 5 Transgender)

		Age: 15-29: 3,895 (1,597 Women and 23 Transgender) 30-64: 2,314 (897Women and 06 Transgender) 65+: 98 (32 Women) **Value Chain:** Date: 2.057 (1.021 Women and 1 Transgender) Banana: 514 (135 Women and 3 Transgender) Mango: 766 (335 Women and 06 Transgender) Onion: 592 (215 Women and 11 Transgender) Tomato: 406 (186 Women) Grapes: 404 (79 Women) Olive: 235 (57 Women and 3 Transgender) Cattle: 401 (123 Women and 1 Transgender) Goat: 427 (157 Women, 1 Transgender) Sheep: 299 (127 Women and 03 Transgender) Poultry: 206 (91 Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: 2,467 (919 Women and 7 Transgender) Sindh: 3,840 (1,607 Women and 22 Transgender)
	1.6. Percentage increase in investment in the targeted value chain by supported SMEs (disaggregated by sex, sector, value chain and province)	Overall, **68%** (86% in case of Women) **increase** in investment by MG beneficiary SMEs **Sector:** Horticulture: 40% increase Livestock: 44% increase **Value Chain:** Date: 70% (108% increase by Women) Banana: 50% (68% increase by Women) Mango: 68% (94% increase by Women) Onion: 89% (0% increase by Women) Tomato: 43% (80% increase by Women)

		Grapes: 75% (22% increase by Women) Olive: 61% (79% increase by Women) Cattle: 107% (99% increase by Women) Goat: 76% (76% increase by Women) Sheep: 59% (90% increase by Women) Poultry: 48% (60% increase by Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: 62% Sindh: 73%
	1.7. Amount of finance accessed by SMEs in selected sectors including green finance (disaggregated by sex, sector, value chain and province)	**USD 9,278,680** **Matching Grant amount :** USD 5,265,704 (USD 4,877,144 Men, USD 386,767 to Women and USD 1,793 to a Transgender beneficiary) and **Loan /Financing Accessed by SMEs:** USD 4,012,976 (USD 228,286 to Women) **Sector:** Horticulture: USD 7,307,675(182,885 W) Livestock: USD 1,971,005(432,164 W) **Value Chain (in USD):** Date: 2,781,938 (20,686 accessed by Women) Banana: 819,157 (11,377 accessed by Women) Mango: 1,083,193 (82,162 accessed by Women) Onion:1,279,581 (42,772 accessed by Women) Tomato: 478,168 (6,922 accessed by Women) Grapes: 605,222 (8,979 accessed by Women) Olive: 260,416 (9,987 accessed by Women) Cattle: 550,764 (154,613 accessed by Women)

		Goat: 679,346 (143,350 accessed by Women) Sheep: 518,956 (99,124 accessed by Women) Poultry: 221,939 (35,077 accessed by Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan 4,260,322 USD (313,072 W) Sindh 5,018,358 USD (301,980 W)

Table 4: Output Level Progress (PPAF Component)

Output 1.4	Indicators	Target	Achievement	Remarks
Increased access to finance for the target SMEs, with a focus on environmentally sustainable technologies	1.4.1. Number of financial institutions (banks, MFBs and MFIs) with whom collaborations have been made on appropriate financial products and services	20	24	Formal MoUs were signed with 24 but engaged 29 financial institutions (banks, MFBs and MFIs)
	1.4.2. Number of SMEs with improved skills in financial literacy and business planning (disaggregated by sex of owner, sector and province)	500	**1,091** (475women) **Sector:** Horticulture 445 (113 Women) Livestock: 646 (362 Women and 2 Transgender) **Province:** Balochistan: 505 (192 Women) Sindh: 586 (283 Women and 2 T)	Target overachieved
	1.4.3. Number of SMEs with access to financial services with EU support (disaggregated by sex of owner, sector and province)	200	**520 (214women)** **Sector:** Horticulture: 246 (53 Women) Livestock: 274 (161 Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: 241(50 Women) Sindh: 279 (164 Women)	Linking 200 SMEs to FIs and mobilizing a total loan amount of USD 04 million was a daunting task in wake of some extraordinary challenges such as very high (up to 23%) KIBOR, a slowed down economy in COVID-19 aftermath, repeated Floods, political instability and law and order

				situation in some of the focal areas. However, the PPAF GRASP team with meticulous planning, field work, engagement of stakeholders and leveraging of MoUs with FIs, increased awareness and facilitation of loan products and simultaneously worked /prepared SMEs for uptake of loans resulting in mobilizing USD 4,012,976 loan for 520 (214 women) beneficiary SMEs.
	1.4.4. Amount in USD provided through matching grants to eligible SMEs (disaggregated by sex, sector, value chain and province)	USD 05 million	**USD 5,265,704** (USD 386,767women and one grant worth USD 1,793 to a Transgender individual) **Sector:** Horticulture: USD 4,014,945 (USD 110,057 to Women) Livestock: 1,250,759 (USD 276,710 to Women and USD 1,793 to a Transgender) **Value chain:** Date: 1,423,435 (USD 17,666 to Women) Banana:520,717 (USD 4,454 to Women) Mango: 563,178 (USD 57,349 to Women) Onion: 615,327 (USD 7,601 to Women) Tomato: 266,249 (USD 4,021 to Women) Grapes: 400,860 (USD 8,979 to Women) Olive: 225,179 (USD 9,987 to Women) Cattel: USD 352,929 (USD 101,194 to Women)	Provided to 399 SMEs. The original target of grants was 269 SMEs. However, over project life there was exchange gain and an additional USD 500,000 allocation for grants. With the additional available resources, 130 more grants were made. The total allocation for grants component was USD 5.5 million of which USD 5.265 million worth of grants were administered by PPAF through its 07 POs.

			Goat: 411,253 (USD 89,895 to Women and USD 1,793 to a Transgender) Sheep: 271,655 (USD 50,543 to Women) Poultry: 214,922 (USD 35,077 to Women) **Provinces:** Balochistan: USD 2,647,804 (USD 178,191 to Women) Sindh: USD 2,617,900 (USD 208,576 to Women and USD 1,793 to a Transgender)	

The detailed analysis of Access to Finance indicators is included in section 3.3.

3.1 Rural Mobilization

In the GRASP Project, Rural Mobilization functioned more as a *business mobilization* mechanism rather than traditional social mobilization. It served as a foundation for building and driving project momentum, enabling all project partners to effectively engage suitable SMEs and primary producers for driving the intended inclusive economic growth and resilience across Sindh and Balochistan. The approach focused on identifying, orienting and mobilizing SMEs including primary producers to invest their time, resources, skills, and capital in improving profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability of their operations in a cleaner, greener and resilient way. It encouraged rural enterprises to move beyond survival mode and instead pursue growth, diversification, and formalization, even amid challenges such as insecurity, inflation, high KIBOR rates, low purchasing power, increased taxation, high utility costs, environmental and weather challenges and broader economic and political uncertainty.

At a time when many businesses were downsizing or relocating outside Pakistan, the GRASP business mobilization efforts motivated local SMEs to stay, innovate, and invest. Through ongoing engagement by Partner Organizations (POs), rural entrepreneurs were encouraged to register in FAO run FCBS and other project activities to adopt modern and climate-resilient technologies, improve product quality, utilize digital tools, and expand market outreach. Mobilization also served as a visibility and outreach mechanism, introducing GRASP to SMEs, chambers of commerce, trade associations, financial institutions, government departments, lead firms, and civil society, effectively promoting project and emanating opportunities across the wider ecosystem.

From the very beginning, orientation and introductory sessions triggered a cycle of reflection and action, prompting SMEs to discuss and explore market trends and digital platforms to evolve and improve their businesses in line with modern growth and sustainability principles. This early engagement helped build awareness, ownership and accountability, while also serving as an initial due diligence step identifying the right SMEs, assessing their capacity, competencies, and potential, and gauging their willingness to get involved and benefit from project interventions, helping project to build a standardized digital database (GRASP MIS) /pool of potential beneficiary SMEs (about 45,726 (16,782 Women Owned /Led)) across all 11 value chains and 22 focal districts in both provinces. During the course of action, the SMEs in project database were found to be better positioned with basic due diligence already done to benefit from access to finance, training, networking, exposure or other forms of support facilitated through GRASP project.

Beyond business expansion, mobilization delivered long-term benefits *"What's in it for me (SMEs)"* including the adoption of climate-resilient technologies, increased innovation and value addition, optimization and scaling of operations, enterprise formalization resulting in increased production, better quality, lowering wastage, improving income and profitability and creation of full-time and part-time employment opportunities. It nurtured adaptive, responsible, and market-oriented SMEs that became local role models.

Importantly, mobilization did not end after identification and orientation. It extended into continuous mentoring, guidance, and handholding throughout the business growth journey. Despite difficult circumstances including insecurity in Balochistan, incidents of terrorism, and the devastating floods in Sindh and Balochistan the mobilization teams remained consistently active on the ground, engaging business communities, mobilizing stakeholders, and sustaining project outreach.

Ultimately, the Rural/Business Mobilization component under GRASP built confidence, trust, capacity, and long-term commitment among rural entrepreneurs and helped GRASP partners in working with most suitable SMEs. It transformed isolated enterprises into connected, capable, and informed economic actors prepared to access finance, embrace innovation, and contribute to Pakistan's sustainable economic development.

In the GRASP project, Rural Mobilization was led by PPAF through its seven Partner Organizations (POs), i.e. GSF, RDF, SAFWCO and TRDP operating across the target 51 Union Councils (UCs) in Sindh and BRSP, TF and SPO in 45 UCs in Balochistan. POs played a central role in field-level engagement, beginning with comprehensive UC-level mapping to identify primary producers and potential SMEs by using data /information collection tools developed by GRASP PPAF M&E in close coordination with ITC and FAO. POs collected and reported in GRASP MIS the baseline SME data to support effective targeting and planning. Existing community institutions facilitate local level entry facilitated by social mobilizers and livelihoods officers.

The selection of potential Union Councils (UCs) for the GRASP project began in June 2021. After extensive consultations with partners and relevant stakeholders at both provincial and district levels, a selection matrix was developed. Based on the agreed criteria, the Sindh and Balochistan Provincial Steering Committees finalized a total of 96 UCs (five UCs in each selected district and one UC in Sujawal, Sindh) to be targeted under the project. The UC-level mapping was conducted to provide a detailed understanding of the local context, including demography, livelihoods, key value chains, existing SMEs, local markets, infrastructure, and support services. This exercise allowed the project teams to identify specific UCs, villages and communities where primary producers and SMEs were concentrated, ensuring that interventions were evidence-based, targeted, and aligned with local needs and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the business ecosystem, opportunities, gaps, and enabling environment within the targeted UCs. It also assessed the support market, including technical supporters, TVET institutions, marketing and media firms, product development companies, transporters, repair and maintenance service providers, packing and packaging companies, agro-veterinary suppliers, and crop protection dealers, and mapped the enabling environment, including government departments, trade associations, banks, MFIs, farmers' associations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, CSOs, and donors, to understand the institutional support available for SMEs. It provided a platform for partner organization staff and other stakeholders to engage with and understand SME needs and priorities and raise awareness about GRASP components and support mechanisms.

After mapping, POs continued to work with project partners to identify and select eligible primary producers and SMEs from existing database or new identification based on particular demand /criteria for a GRASP specific activity such as enrollment and training through FCBS, FMCs, SPS, Matching Grants, exposure, networking, credit facilitation, technical trainings or other events and activities of GRASP in close coordination with all GRASP partners i.e. ITC, FAO, and SMEDA and any additional consultants and experts engaged by them for GRASP work.

At the enterprise level, POs assisted FCBS/FMCs and SMEs in developing business cases and proposals for the matching grant scheme. They conducted pre-screening and ensured compliance with PPAF's selection criteria before forwarding applications to respective PO regional office for further processing. PPAF utilized the institutional and financial management capacity of its partner organizations for grant disbursement, business plan implementation, and monitoring for maximum transparency and efficiency.

POs also facilitated different kinds of market-linkage activities, enabling SMEs participation in trade fairs, expos, exposure visits and investment events at provincial and national levels. They helped link SMEs with private-sector actors, and supported access to diverse training modules offered under the project. PPAF tracked POs' work through a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework, also requiring POs to regularly track progress of SMEs and submitted quarterly performance and financial reports to PPAF. This approach ensured accountability, transparency, and sustained support to beneficiary SMEs throughout the project lifecycle.

The following table includes key stats of achievement under the rural /business mobilization work of GRASP led by PPAF.

Table 5: Rural Mobilization Achievements vs Targets

Sr#	Activities	Target	PPAF Achievement
1	facilitate and collaborate with FAO in identifying and selecting primary producers/farmers for Farmer Climate Business Schools (FCBSs).	33,000	**45,726 (16,782 women, 04 Transgender)** By Valuechain: Date: 8,202 (2,707 Women) Onion: 5,578 (1,129 Women) Tomato: 6,995 (2,623 Women) Goat: 6,141 (3,261 Women, 01 Transgender) Sheep: 4,291 (2,076 Women) Cattel: 3,774 (1,903 Women, 02 Transgender) Poultry: 3,076 (2,464 Women, 01 Transgender) Banana: 2637 (162 Women) Mango: 2467 (161 Women) Grapes: 1,713 (146 Women) Olive: 853 (150 Women) Sindh: 23,515 (7,873 Women, 03 Transgender) Balochistan: 22,211 (8,909 Women, 01 Transgender)

Sr#	Activities	Target	PPAF Achievement
2	Selection of SMEs for training in collaboration with ITC, FAO, SMEDA, and CABI. The training areas covered various aspects such as Agri-Business Management, SheTrade, Marketing, Quality Management, and Technical Training in Wool Processing, Grapes, etc.	-	**6,960 (3,037 women)** By Valuechain: Date: 1,162 (631 Women) Onion: 755 (156 Women) Tomato: 1,367 (679 Women) Goat: 861 (434 Women) Sheep: 272 (62 Women) Cattel: 1,207 (799 Women) Poultry: 174 (99 Women) Banana: 438 (59 Women) Mango: 485 (106 Women) Grapes: 193 (07 Woman) Olive: 755 (156 Women) Sindh: 5,102 (2,562 Women) Balochistan: 1,858 (475 Women)
3	linkages development for SMEs and participation in fairs, investment panels, expos, and various business enhancement exercises.	327	**5,838 (2,881 women, 05 Transgender)** By Valuechain: Date: 811 (378 Women) Onion: 406 (120 Women) Tomato: 1,837 (966 Women) Goat: 418 (260 Women, 05 Transgender) Sheep: 59 (12 Women) Cattel: 1,536 (988 Women) Poultry: 19 (09 Women) Banana: 350 (46 Women) Mango: 341 (101 Women) Grapes: 31 (01 Woman) Olive: 30 (0 Women) Sindh: 5,416 (2,817 Women, 05 Transgender) Balochistan: 422 (64 Women)
4	Facilitation in registration with FBR and SECP and (membership of) other bodies.	-	**1,188 (409 women, 01 Transgender)** Sindh: 700 (337 Women, 01 Transgender) Balochistan: 488 (72 Women)

The GRASP PPAF team significantly exceeded its SME profiling /registration (in GRASP MIS Database) target, achieving a total SME count of **45,726 unique records against a target of 33,000**, demonstrating strong outreach and mobilization across Sindh and Balochistan. This overachievement almost **39% above the target** reflects the effectiveness of field engagement and coordination with POs and other partners, particularly FAO, in identifying and selecting primary producers and farmers for Climate Farmer Business Schools (FCBSs). Notably, **16,782 women** are among the registered SMEs and primary producers, indicating meaningful progress in bringing women-led and women-managed enterprises into formal development processes. This level of inclusion signals an important shift in rural gender participation, where women are increasingly recognized as economic actors within agricultural and non-agricultural value chains. The initial target of identification of 33,000 primary producers meant supporting FAO in identification and selection for FCBS and FMCs. However, with evolving discussions with project stakeholders, especially ITC, the scope of this activity was enhanced to cover a diverse set of SMEs helping all project partners in drawing potential beneficiaries from a readily available pool of data /SMEs for respective work /trainings /capacity building and other project interventions. As indicated earlier, the mobilization efforts ultimately helped identify and record about 45,726 primary producers /SMEs in the project database. This data/information has been shared with relevant stakeholders such as Government, FIs, lead firms and business chambers for continuity of support as and where an opportunity presents itself.

PPAF GRASP helped other project partners and specialist consultants engaged by them to identify suitable SMEs for different technical training. As a result, a total of **6,960 SMEs** were identified from GRASP SME database and trained by ITC, FAO, SMEDA, and CABI, covering essential business areas such as agri-business management, SheTrade, marketing, quality assurance, and specialized technical skills like wool processing and grape value addition. Although this activity did not have a predefined quantitative target, the scale achieved indicates robust demand for capacity-building services and strong institutional synergies.

Importantly, **3,037 women** were among the trainees, demonstrating deliberate efforts to enhance women's business capabilities and strengthen their participation in competitive value chains. This progress is critical for bridging the gender skills gap and empowering women to contribute more effectively to economic resilience. The horticulture, livestock, value addition, and safety training delivered to SMEs, producers, and master trainers across targeted districts helped build local capacities, strengthened quality assurance systems, improved product handling, and enhanced value-added practices within key value chains. Additional awareness sessions with butchers, dairy farmers, and milk vendors further promoted good hygiene and food safety standards. As a result, participating SMEs including women entrepreneurs reported improved understanding and adoption of quality, safety, and hygiene practices.

Participation in fairs, investment panels, expos, and business enhancement exercises refers to SMEs' engagement in market linkage processes embedded within value-chain development interventions. Such participation aims to strengthen buyer–seller linkages and results in increased sales and business transactions, improved market knowledge, peer learning on products and services, exposure to new technologies, and adoption of practical business tips and techniques. These effects are therefore reflected through consolidated value-chain performance results rather than standalone event counts. Under the PPAF GRASP a total of **5,838 SMEs** were facilitated to develop market linkages and participate in fairs, investment panels, expos, and other business enhancement activities by different project partners, against an original target of **327 SMEs**. This reflects an exceptional achievement of **1,685%**, demonstrating the teams' strong ability to connect rural enterprises with new markets. Of the total SMEs supported, **2,884 were women-led or women-managed enterprises**, representing **49%** of all beneficiaries. The expanded access to market platforms significantly increased business transactions and boosted the income of participating SMEs, particularly for women entrepreneurs who gained much-needed visibility, buyer engagement, and commercial confidence.

With GRASP project support a total of **1,188 SMEs**, including **409 women-led and 01 Transgender led businesses** have been facilitated in registration with SECP, FBR and some in getting membership of different business chambers and associations. Of the total, 807 have been registered with FBR and SECP and remaining 381 were facilitated in getting membership of different business chambers /associations, marking a critical step toward SME formalization under the GRASP framework. Although no numeric target was assigned to PPAF, PPAF POs also worked to get about 91 SMEs registered before SMEDA came on board. The achieved numbers highlight considerable progress in guiding rural enterprises toward legal and financial inclusion by supporting and facilitating SMEDA, the GRASP partner leading SME registration process. The substantial participation of women indicates a positive trend toward formalizing women-owned businesses, which historically face greater barriers in documentation, compliance, and regulatory adherence. This advancement strengthens women's prospects for accessing finance, entering new markets, and benefiting government and private-sector initiatives aimed at enterprise growth. This achievement significantly contributed to advancing the formalization of enterprises across the target districts.

Table 6: SME Registration Update

Registration Body	Men	Women	Transgender	Total
FBR	435	264	1	700
Security & Exchange Commission of Pakistan	99	8	0	107
Business Chamber /Association Membership	244	137	0	381
Total	**778**	**409**	**1**	**1,188**

Registration facilitated access to key services such as business bank accounts, commercial financing, government incentives etc. SMEs also became better positioned to benefit from government support programs, tax relief measures, and capacity-building initiatives. Moreover, the process promoted improved record-keeping and financial management practices, strengthening internal governance, and accountability. Beyond individual business benefits, the formalization of 1,188 SMEs contributed to broader development outcomes, including increased economic activity, job creation, and enhanced revenue generation at the national and provincial levels. By integrating these SMEs into the formal economy, the project helped create a more inclusive and resilient economic environment. A total of 381 SMEs (137 women**)** were linked and registered as member with relevant Chambers of Commerce and Industry. These memberships enhanced SMEs' credibility, market access, and integration into formal business networks, while facilitating access to market information, networking opportunities, and business support services that contributed to their competitiveness and sustainability. Overall, formal registration is seen as a transformative step for supporting SMEs unlocking opportunities for expansion, strengthening their operational foundations, and positioning them for long-term competitiveness.

A de-facto development under the mobilization component had been initiated by Cluster-level coordination meetings. The cluster-level meetings were convened in response to communication among ITC, PPAF, FAO, and SMEDA to promote synergy and cooperation among GRASP partners, FCBSs/FMCs, and SMEs, including primary producers and farmers with the purpose to identify challenges and translating them into concrete action plans, thereby fostering growth in value chain relationships.

The clustering approach, under which a total of eight clusters were formed, was guided by a clear operational and commercial rationale, including the presence of common SME activities, contiguity around shared commercial value chains, connectivity to main road arteries, and ease of access for participating enterprises. Clustering also enabled more effective management and coordination, reduced operational costs, and ensured logistical efficiency including EoI facilitation and Partner Organization selection thereby maximizing the outreach and impact of market linkage and business enhancement interventions.

A total of **six cluster-level meetings** were conducted during the project period, covering all **eight clusters** formed under the clustering approach. These meetings were organized at different points in time based on the **availability of relevant partners and security clearances**, particularly in Balochistan.

The cluster-level meetings were held as follows:

- **September 2023:** Cluster 3 (Shaheed Benazirabad, Khairpur, Sanghar)
- **October 2023:** Combined meetings covering Cluster 1 (Karachi, Hyderabad), Cluster 2 (Thatta, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sujawal), and Cluster 4 (Tharparkar, Tando Allah Yar, Matiari, Mirpur Khas)
- **January–February 2024:** Cluster 5 (Quetta, Pishin, Nushki, Kharan)
- **December 2024:** Cluster 7 (Panjgur, Kech)
- **June 2025:** Cluster 2 (Thatta, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sujawal) and Cluster 4 (Tharparkar, Tando Allah Yar, Matiari, Mirpur Khas)
- **July 2025:** Cluster 8 (Zhob, Musakhel)

The cluster-level meeting emerged as a key collaborative initiative driven by engagement among ITC, PPAF, FAO, and implementing partner organizations in both Sindh and Balochistan. Designed to cultivate synergy across GRASP partners, FMCs, SMEs, FCBS, primary producers, and farmers, the meeting served as a strategic platform to surface challenges and transform them into targeted, actionable solutions within the value chain. It effectively bridged communication gaps between field-level actors and core teams, ensuring timely project updates and aligning efforts with the evolving needs of beneficiaries. By bringing the GRASP team together on the ground, the meeting fostered knowledge sharing, collective problem-solving, and forward momentum in project delivery. The meetings played a crucial role in enhancing communication between field staff and core teams, ensuring project progress updates, and addressing information gaps. The filed mission and meeting not only brought together the entire GRASP team to align project implementation with beneficiaries' needs, learned lessons, tackle down the challenges, and collaboratively find solutions.

Moreover, expos, melas, and TDAP-supported events under the project and facilitated by PPAF and its POs significantly enhanced market visibility for rural enterprises /SMEs by enabling product showcasing, business matchmaking, and exposure to emerging market trends and innovations. These platforms strengthened SMEs' confidence, marketing skills, overall competitiveness and business volume, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth and the sustainability of rural enterprises under GRASP e.g. two GRASP-supported SMEs from Balochistan Mr. Mohammad Jan, a grantee awarded PKR 30 million and owner of Baloch Hamza and Brothers Date Company (District Panjgur), and Mr. Maqbool Alam Noori, owner of Durfishan Dates (District Kech) successfully participated in the "Made in Pakistan Exhibition & Business Forum 2025" held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from February 5–7, 2025, SMEs participated in the 4th Pakistan–Africa Trade Development Conference and Pakistan Single Country Exhibition in Cairo and Tashkent, Uzbekistan (Tashkent Exhibition) and Egypt 2024 and 2025. SMEs showcased a diverse range of high-quality date products and value-added innovations, including fresh dates, date chocolate, date vinegar, date coffee, and date syrup. Their participation drew substantial visitor engagement, resulting in complete stock sell-out and robust revenue generation. Beyond sales, the event created opportunities for meaningful networking with international buyers and market actors, laying out the groundwork for future export prospects. The successful participation of these SMEs not only strengthened their global visibility but also underscored the export potential of Balochistan's date value chain, effectively contributing to GRASP's broader objectives of economic inclusion, value chain development, and market expansion for rural enterprises.

3.2 Sub-Output 2.5 (Flood Contingency Plan)

Farmers Affected by Flood Received Input Support through Contingency Fund

Floods struck Pakistan in June 2022 and caused widespread damage especially in Balochistan and that to agricultural production and adversely impacted different types and kinds of agri based enterprises. To mitigate the negative impacts of the 2022 floods and heavy rains, the Government of Balochistan requested ITC /PPAF to provide certified wheat seed support to the affected population. Based on the request of the Government of Balochistan, a decision was made to provide certified wheat seed support in Zhob, Pishin, Kech, and Panjgur districts to the flood affected population. The objective of the certified wheat seed assistance was to help primary producers sustain their livelihoods after the floods. The initiative was approved by EU through ITC and PPAF facilitated this support as emergency aid to facilitate economic recovery in the aftermath of floods.

With ITC/EU approval, PPAF mobilized its partner organizations (SPO and TF) in the districts of Kech, Panjgur, Pishin, and Zhob to validate the government provided flood-affected farmers' lists requiring wheat seed support while working closely with local administration, DDMAs, and the Agriculture Extension Department, PPAF procured 13,500 certified 50-kg wheat seed bags from the Punjab Seed Corporation after a competitive procurement process. One seed bag (each 50 KG) was provided to 13,500 primary producers, equaling a total of 675,000 KGs of certified seed, enabling the cultivation of 16,838 acres of land. Seed distribution was completed in early January 2023, helping with cultivation of winter cultivation of wheat for the season 2023/24.

The following table presents wheat seed distribution by district and gender:

Table 7: Seed Distribution to Flood Affected Primary Producers

Wheat Seed Distributed to Flood Affected in Balochistan				
S. No	**District Name**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total Wheat Bags Distributed**
1	Pishin	3,407	5	3,412
2	Zhob	3,336	2	3,338
3	Kech	3,163	212	3,375
4	Panjgur	2,810	565	3,375
Total		**12,716**	**784**	**13,500**

A third-party impact assessment commissioned by PPAF GRASP concluded overall, the timely intervention reflects strategic targeting and efficient coordination between PPAF, local authorities, and partner organisations, overcoming operational challenges like inaccessibility. The positive productivity and adoption outcomes underscore the initiative's success in not only promoting food security but also laying foundations for continued cultivation of high-quality seed varieties within vulnerable smallholder communities. The study revealed that certified seed distribution effectively enabled the restoration of agricultural livelihoods following floods when primary producers faced resource constraints. Positive productivity and adoption outcomes underscore the initiative's success in not only promoting food security but also laying foundations for continued cultivation of high-quality seed varieties within vulnerable smallholder communities.

The study noted "providing free certified wheat seeds to primary producers who could not otherwise afford, emerged as one of the most critical and widely needed forms of assistance for primary producers in the aftermath of the floods. Out of 1,534 primary producer samples 694 were from GRASP targeted UCs; this implies that 45% of the recipient (13,500) of wheat seed assistance were from UCs where GRASP value chain activities are implemented. The analysis of the increased production and enhanced profit resulted in a quick return to routine cropping patterns, in addition to ensuring food security and seed stocking for the primary producers".

3.3 Access to Finance

3.3.1 Financial Institutions Supported

To Offer Financing for Climate Smart Agriculture Technologies

Access to finance (A2F) plays a pivotal role in the strengthening of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and value chain subsectors by supporting their growth, competitiveness, and sustainability. Without adequate financial resources, even the most promising SMEs struggle to expand operations in the existing market and enter the new market, adopt new technologies, or respond to National and International Market demands. Financial access enables SMEs to increase production, improve quality standards, hire skilled labor, and explore new markets. Thus, enhancing their integration into broader value chains and contributing to sector-wide productivity and economic resilience.

Strengthened A2F also promotes innovation and competitiveness within value chain subsectors. With sufficient capital, SMEs can invest in research and development, product diversification, value addition, technology adoption and linkages, helping them adapt to evolving market needs and environmental challenges. Financial inclusion allows them to introduce climate-resilient infrastructure and technologies, and build operational efficiency, strengthen vertical and horizontal linkages, making the entire ecosystem more robust and cohesive.

A2F for SMEs exists in multiple forms including debt, equity, grants, guarantees, Islamic financing, blended finance, insurance and digital or alternative instruments. Each serves a distinct purpose such as debt provides working capital, equity fuels innovation and growth, grants and matching grants mitigate risks, guarantees attract private capital and digital tools to expand inclusion for underserved enterprises.

Under the EU-funded GRASP Project, A2F primarily focuses on linking SMEs with financial institutions for mobilizing credit / loans/financing facility for business purposes and providing matching grants. Such linkages bridge the financing gap that often prevents rural enterprises from scaling or modernizing. Partnerships with commercial banks, microfinance institutions, micro finance banks and other intermediaries help rural SMEs access affordable credit and innovative financing solutions tailored to their needs. These engagements also encourage financial institutions to explore rural markets, fostering inclusive growth.

Matching grants are non-refundable funds combining donor support, and SME contributions serve as a key instrument for promoting innovation and risk mitigation. They reduce the financial burden on SMEs investing in new ventures or technologies while acting as both a pull and push strategy: pulling SMEs toward formal systems through accountability and contribution and pushing them toward competitiveness by reducing investment risks.

Moreover, facilitating access to finance also supports the formalization of SMEs, enabling them to open bank accounts, register with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), and maintain audited financial records. These practices foster transparency, creditworthiness, and access to larger funding opportunities. Over time, they promote behavioral change, financial discipline, and a culture of compliance laying the foundation for a more resilient, documented, and growth-oriented SME sector.

PPAF led the Access to Finance (A2F) component of GRASP by designing and facilitating pro-poor financial products in partnership with financial institutions to serve rural SMEs. Through collaboration with PMIC as the lead partner for SME financing, and with non-bank financial institutions such as Thardeep Microfinance Foundation, SAFCO Microfinance Company, and Shah Sachal Sami Foundation, PPAF supported the development of loan and insurance products tailored to agricultural and livestock value chains. Partnerships with commercial institutions, including, United Bank Limited (UBL), National Bank of Pakistan, ASKARI Bank, Allied Bank, First Women Bank and JS Bank and many others, further strengthened product diversification and outreach.

By collaborating with financial institutions and specialized consultants, PPAF facilitated the review, design, pilot testing, and rollout of financing instruments that help SMEs shift from one-time matching grants to sustainable access to formal credit. The inclusion of risk-mitigation measures such as developing insurance products and supporting geographic expansion strengthened the creditworthiness of small producers and improved the viability of lending for partner institutions.

Governance of the component was ensured through formal MoUs and grant agreements between PPAF and partner financial institutions, covering product development, interest and insurance subsidies, and operational support. Financial institutions committed their own lending capital, maintained financial records, and provided consolidated reporting to PPAF, while PPAF's A2F team monitored progress, milestones, and financial compliance. Progress during the project time is as follows.

Table 8: Access to Finance Progress Against Key Indicators

Sr.	Activities	Target	Cumulative
1	Number of Financial Institutions (banks, MFBs and MFIs) assisted to develop appropriate products and services for SMEs	20	24
2	Number of FIs assisted in providing credit guarantee schemes	5	13
3	Number of FIs to collaborate with for offering financing to SMEs including environmental technologies.	2	24
4	Number of SMEs linked to relevant funding sources	200 (USD 4 million)	520 SMEs[3] (USD4,012,976)
5	Number of SMEs provided with matching grants in combination with lending	50	35
6	%age of targeted SMEs assisted in mobilizing funding	30%	160%

While the blended finance design envisaged that 50 matching-grant SMEs would also access loan financing, 35 SMEs ultimately availed loans. This outcome was primarily influenced by structural and market-level constraints. Key factors included the high cost of debt linked to elevated KIBOR, which reduced loan affordability for rural and agri-based SMEs; a clear preference among SMEs for matching grants, as these provide non-repayable capital without increasing debt exposure or financial risk; and collateral requirements and short loan tenors. In several cases, investment needs were

[3] The detailed list of SMEs, location, loan amount, conversion rate and name of FI is attached as Annex III

sufficiently met through matching grants and internal resources, reducing the demand for additional borrowing.

The Access to Finance (A2F) intervention generated substantial and lasting economic impact across targeted districts by expanding rural SMEs' access to capital, strengthening financial inclusion, and driving gender-responsive enterprise growth. The project facilitated a total of 520 SMEs which accessed a total of **USD 4.012 million** in financing in shape of 593 different loans, which translated directly into higher productivity, improved market performance, and greater resilience of local economies.

Table 9: Loan Size Analysis

Loan Category (PKR)	Number of Loans		Total
	Sindh	Balochistan	
< 0.5 million	270	61	331
0.5 - 2.5 million	54	149	203
2.5 - 30 million	14	39	53
> 30 million	6	0	6
Total	**344**	**249**	**593**[4]

Most loans (331 out of 593) fall under the small loan category (< PKR 0.5 million), indicating a strong preference or need for micro-level financing, especially in Sindh, which accounts for most of these loans. Balochistan, however, shows a higher concentration of loans in the PKR 0.5–2.5 million and PKR 2.5–30 million categories, suggesting greater demand for medium-sized financing there. Only a small number of large loans (> PKR 30 million) were issued, all in Sindh. Overall, Sindh accounts for a higher number of total loans (344) compared to Balochistan (249). The loan portfolio, with 593 loans disbursed, enhances enterprise development, stimulates local economic activity, and contributes positively to the project's outcome of improving access to finance for target value chain actors.

This infusion of capital allowed SMEs to upgrade production systems, adopt improved technologies, expand processing and packaging operations, and integrating climate-smart practices. As a result, enterprises strengthened their competitiveness, increased output quality, and created new employment and income opportunities within their communities. These changes collectively contributed to measurable improvements in local economic growth and value chain performance.

A major transformative impact was seen in women's economic empowerment. Of the total SMEs who secured loans, women owned /led SMEs made up 41% of them, marking a significant shift in financial inclusion and economic participation. With improved access to capital, women expanded their involvement in high value activities processing, packaging, grading, and quality enhancement leading to more diversified production, higher product standards, and increased household incomes. Enhanced financial agency also strengthened women's decision-making power within families and enterprises, creating more inclusive and equitable local economies.

The project successfully linked 520 SMEs (214 women owned /led SMEs) to formal funding sources and mobilized a total of 593 loans (USD 4.012 million), enabling enterprise growth across sectors such as horticulture, livestock, dates, onions, and small-scale processing. Many SMEs adopted resource-efficient, climate-resilient technologies, contributing to greener value chains and more

[4] The detailed list of SMEs, location, loan amount, conversion rate and name of FI is attached as Annex III

sustainable production systems. This shift has strengthened the long-term resilience of rural markets against climate and economic shocks.

The impact extended beyond individual businesses to a wider financial ecosystem. Through GRASP support, 24 financial institutions began offering credit guarantee schemes and SME financing products including green finance significantly expanding financial access in underserved rural areas. This institutional strengthening has laid the foundation for continued lending to rural SMEs beyond the project period.

Blended finance created high-impact outcomes. 35 SMEs received matching grants paired with loans, enabling them to become creditworthy and transition into sustainable borrowing from formal institutions. Many of these businesses are now positioned for continued expansion, demonstrating strong potential for post-project growth.

Overall, GRASP achieved 160% of its SMEs mobilizing financing target, demonstrating a dramatic improvement in credit uptake and SME readiness. Financial literacy, business training, and linkage-building activities transformed SMEs' capacity to engage with financial institutions, resulting in higher loan success rates, stronger financial discipline, and expanded market integration.

Under the GRASP project, insurance coverage has emerged as a critical tool for strengthening the resilience of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in rural and agriculture-dependent districts. By facilitating insurance for 20 farm-based SMEs covering a total asset value of PKR 9.5 million the project has enabled vulnerable entrepreneurs to safeguard their livestock, equipment, and farm assets against unforeseen shocks such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and market disruptions. This financial protection not only reduces the risk of catastrophic losses but also builds confidence among SMEs to invest, expand, and innovate without the fear of losing their livelihoods.

Districts	No of SMEs	Premium Paid	Sum Covered
HYDERABAD	10	135993	2715000
MIRPUR KHAS	3	217500	4350000
NAWABSHAH/SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD	2	38000	760000
SANGHAR	3	48750	975000
SUJAWAL	1	20000	400000
THATTA	1	15000	300000
Total	**20**	**475243**	**9500000**

Collectively, the project facilitated insurance coverage for horticulture land valued at PKR 9.5 million, against a total premium contribution of PKR 475,243. The insured land primarily supports targeted value chain of GRASP project, which represents a critical income source for rural SMEs in the target areas.

The partnership with Salam Takaful Limited has ensured accessible and affordable risk-mitigation services, demonstrating how insurance can serve as a powerful driver of stability, sustainability, and long-term enterprise growth within the GRASP target areas.

Despite encouraging progress, implementation of horticulture land insurance faced several challenges at the community level. A major constraint was limited awareness and understanding of land-based insurance products among small farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. Building confidence in claim settlement mechanisms required sustained coordination with Salam Takaful Limited, on-ground facilitation, and transparent communication with beneficiaries. Logistical constraints, including dispersed farm locations and limited access in remote areas like Sujawal and Thatta, also increased implementation time and effort.

The experience highlights that successful scaling of horticulture land insurance requires strong financial literacy interventions, simplified land verification processes, flexible premium payment options, and continuous engagement with local communities. The collaboration with Salam Takaful Limited demonstrated a viable and replicable model for extending Shariah-compliant risk-mitigation solutions to horticulture-based SMEs, contributing to improved resilience, income stability, and long-term sustainability within GRASP target areas.

The combined impact of access to finance interventions is visible across targeted districts in the form of stronger value chain performance, increased enterprise productivity, expanded market opportunities, and rising incomes. Most importantly, women's enhanced participation in finance and enterprise development has driven more inclusive, equitable, and resilient economic growth that will continue to transform rural livelihoods beyond the life of the GRASP project.

3.3.2 Credit Worthiness and Access to Funding for SMEs

Including Climate Smart Agriculture Technologies of SMEs Improved.

To enhance access to finance and strengthen the creditworthiness of beneficiaries across GRASP for target districts and economic segments, five coherent categories of matching grants were developed under the program's Access to Finance component. PPAF adopted a transparent and consultative approach, undertaking extensive stakeholder engagements to map, profile, and classify SMEs using clear and objective criteria such as annual turnover of PKR 20–80 million for medium-sized farmers (6–25 acres) or small SMEs with turnover of PKR 2–20 million, and small primary producers or micro enterprises earning under PKR 2 million annually. These classifications ensured accountability, coherence, and consistency in beneficiary selection, aligning grant allocations with business size, financial capacity, and potential for growth. In all four Cycles of grants were run benefiting 399 SMEs (146 Women and 01 Transgender) across 11 agriculture and horticulture value chains, by disbursing USD 5.265 million of which 80% of SMEs i.e. 319 out of 399 have also invested in and adopted green technologies as part of approved business plan and resulting operations.

Application and hence evaluation criteria for different grant categories were based on prior experience and the scale of operations, ensuring fair and proportionate allocation across segments. In different grant categories, the maximum amount of allocation was PKR 30 million for medium SMEs, PKR 2.5 million for small business, and PKR 500,000 for small and primary producers for the first three cycles of grants. In the fourth and final cycle of grants, categories of 5, 10 and 20 million were introduced to cater segments of SMEs falling between previously introduced categories.

However, the Fourth Cycle of Matching Grants (PKR 2.5 million, 5 million, 10 million, and 20 million) was deliberately designed to be simpler, faster, and more streamlined than the first, second, and third cycles. This refinement was guided by lessons learned from earlier cycles, time constraints in the final phase of the GRASP Project, and the need to accelerate approvals and disbursements while fully safeguarding quality standards, and accountability.

In the first three cycles, the matching grant process followed a multi-stage and time-intensive approach, including financial literacy and business plan development training, extended business plan preparation (20–25 days), support for audits, registration, and bank account opening, and multiple pitching sessions at Partner Organization, Provincial, and Steering Committee levels. While appropriate this approach proved resource-intensive and time-consuming for larger and more mature enterprises, particularly those seeking higher grant amounts.

The Fourth Cycle targeted SMEs applying for PKR 2.5 to 20 million grants that were already investment-ready, typically demonstrating at least three years of value-chain experience, formal SECP/FBR registration, audited financial statements, existing bank accounts, employees, and operational assets. Consequently, many preparatory and capacity-building steps that were critical in earlier cycles were no longer binding constraints, allowing for process simplification without reducing rigor.

Key amendments included treating business plans as applications, eliminating a separate application stage and reducing processing time, and consolidating pitching sessions into a single combined Provincial and National Committee, which reduced duplication, saved time and improved consistency in decision-making. As a result, the Fourth Cycle was "easier" by design, not by dilution reflecting SME maturity, consolidated decision-making, and shorter cycle times relevant to late stage of project implementation.

Table 10: Matching Grants by Size and Cycle

Cycle	Size of Grant (PKR in Million)					Total No. of MGs
	0.5	2.5	10	20	30	
Sindh Province						
Cycle 1	4	7	0	0	2	13
Cycle 2	106	10	0	0	7	123
Cycle 3	36	3	0	0	1	40
Cycle 4	0	2	3	10	0	15
Sub-Total	146	22	3	10	10	**191**
Balochistan Province						
Cycle 1	38	3	0	0	0	41
Cycle 2	83	27	0	0	6	116
Cycle 3	21	13	0	0	4	38
Cycle 4	0	1	6	6	0	13
Sub-Total	142	44	6	6	10	**208**
Total	**288**	**66**	**9**	**16**	**20**	**399**[5]

For the fourth Cycle of grants it was discussed in coordination and planning meetings with ITC and the EUD that, given the timing of the Fourth (final) Matching Grant Cycle, it would be challenging to fully gauge results within the project implementation period. This risk was anticipated and jointly considered during the design and approval of the fourth cycle.

To address this constraint while maintaining accountability and results orientation, the fourth cycle was implemented under a reimbursement-based disbursement model. Under this approach, SMEs were required to first invest their own resources and implement approved business activities in line

[5] The detailed list of SMEs, location, Grant amount, valuechain, conversion rate and other details are attached as Annex IV

with agreed milestones. Grant disbursements were released only upon successful completion and verification of these milestones, ensuring a direct and verifiable link between expenditures and results.

By 30 November 2025, all approved matching grants under the fourth cycle had been fully disbursed following successful milestone verification. The fourth cycle supported 28 SMEs in total, comprising 15 SMEs in Sindh and 13 SMEs in Balochistan, are all operational. While some longer-term outcomes such as sustained business growth, value addition, and employment generation will continue to materialize beyond the project period, the adopted approach ensured strong financial discipline, demonstrated SME commitment, and results-based use of funds, providing a credible and accountable pathway for post-project impact realization.

The data shows that most SMEs i.e. 89% (354 out of 399) in both Sindh and Balochistan fall in the lower grant tiers (0.5M and 2.5M), while allocation /award under higher grant categories (10M, 20M, and 30M) is limited only 45 SMEs (out of 399 i.e. 11% of total). This suggests constraints in rural enterprise maturity, investment readiness, and capacity to scale, indicating a strong need for technical assistance, business development support, and financial literacy training to help SMEs graduate to larger and more impactful agricultural investments. The lower number of grants in later cycles, particularly in Cycles 3 and 4, demonstrate a need for improved pipeline development, broader outreach, and simplified processes to help more SMEs with access opportunities.

Table 11: Grant Cycle Wise Gender Bifurcation

	BALOCHISTAN			SINDH				
Cycle	**Men**	**Women**	**Subtotal**	**Men**	**Women**	**Transgender**	**Subtotal**	**Grand Total**
Cycle 1	28	13	41	10	3	0	13	**54**
Cycle 2	91	25	116	78	45	0	123	**239**
Cycle 3	13	25	38	7	32	1	40	**78**
Cycle 4	12	1	13	13	2	0	15	**28**
Grand Total	**144**	**64**	**208**	**108**	**82**	**1**	**191**	**399**[6]

Gender disparities remain a challenge, with women underrepresented in both provinces and almost no participation from transgender individuals. Women's involvement is particularly low in higher-value grants, reflecting social, economic, and structural barriers that limit their access to capital and commercial agriculture roles. Focused support for women-led SMEs through dedicated grant windows, tailored capacity-building, and targeted mobilization would contribute to more inclusive and sustainable agricultural development. Greater gender inclusion amplifies program's impact by enabling more diverse participation, empowering women economically, and strengthening household-level resilience in agri-based communities. Provincial disparities are visible within grant cycles with Sindh showing stronger participation in Cycle 2 while Balochistan had a larger number of SMEs overall but fewer women and lower engagement in higher grant tiers. These gaps highlight the need for province-specific interventions that address local barriers, strengthen value chain linkages, and enhance market access. Addressing these disparities will ensure equitable distribution of resources, improve regional agricultural competitiveness, and enable SMEs across both provinces to contribute meaningfully to long-term sustainable economic growth.

The fourth cycle of Matching Grants (MG) was not envisaged in the original project design and workplan. Its introduction was the result of adaptive management in response to findings and

[6] The detailed list of SMEs, location, Grant amount, valuechain, conversion rate and other details are attached as Annex IV

recommendations of the European Union–led Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE). The MTE highlighted structural disparity in the original matching grant architecture, which comprised three widely spaced categories of PKR 0.5 million, PKR 2.5 million, and PKR 30 million. This configuration created a pronounced financing gap between small and very large grants, limiting progression pathways for medium-scale SMEs that had outgrown entry-level support but were not yet ready to absorb or justify large-ticket investments.

In response to this recommendation, and following consultation with the EU, ITC, and project partners, a fourth MG cycle was introduced with a revised and more graduated grant structure. The new categories of PKR 0.5 million, PKR 10 million, and PKR 20 million were designed to better reflect the investment absorption capacity of SMEs at different stages of maturity and to provide a clearer growth continuum. This adjustment enabled a more inclusive reach to mid-level enterprises, improved alignment between grant size and business scale, and enhanced the efficiency and developmental impact of grant financing. The fourth cycle thus strengthened the overall relevance and responsiveness of the Matching Grant mechanism, ensuring closer alignment with market realities and SME growth trajectories while remaining consistent with the project's objectives and fiduciary safeguards.

Overall, the GRASP project significantly enhanced SME creditworthiness and broadened financing opportunities within the horticulture and livestock sectors, enabling enterprises to pursue higher growth and long-term sustainability. Improved access to capital, combined with the adoption of climate-smart agricultural technologies, contributed to economic development, environmental sustainability, and strengthened climate resilience in the target communities. Throughout the project period, notable progress was achieved through continuous grant monitoring, exposure visits, completion of business plans linked to civil works, timely disbursement of grants, and the promotion of climate-smart technologies all of which contributed to improved SME performance and financial readiness.

Table 12: Matching Grants Progress by Results Indicators

Sr.	Activities	Target	Cumulative
1	Amount (in USD) provided through matching grants to eligible SMEs	5 million USD	5,265,704 USD[7]
2]	Percentage of matching grants schemes provided in combination with technical assistance for green technologies	30%	80%
3	Number of SMEs supported to improve financial literacy and business planning	500	1,091

The matching grants component delivered strong results, surpassing key targets and demonstrating significant impact on SME growth, capacity building, and adoption of green technologies. The program disbursed USD 5.26 million in matching grants exceeding the original allocation of USD 5 million, which enabled a larger pool of eligible SMEs to invest in business expansion, climate-smart technologies, and improved production systems. This higher-than-planned investment reflects strong

[7] The detailed list of SMEs, location, Grant amount, valuechain, conversion rate and other details are attached as Annex IV

demand, effective outreach, and the program's ability to mobilize and support financially viable enterprises.

Equitable outreach across regions 208 (64 women) SMEs in Balochistan and 191(82 women & 01 Transgender) in Sindh highlights balanced geographic impact, ensuring that both provinces benefited from enhanced enterprise capacity and financial support. The program's diversified engagement across key horticulture and livestock value chains including dates, mango, cattle, goat, poultry, banana, onion, grapes, sheep, and tomato has strengthened local economies, improved productivity, and increased resilience across multiple market segments.

Sustained support delivered through four grant cycles contributed to continuous enterprise upgrading, improved business performance, and stronger market participation. Matching grants records and tracking data in project MIS, reflect significant impact in green technology adoption i.e. 80% (319 of 399) grantee SMEs, gender inclusion i.e. 37% (146 of 399) SMEs women owned /led, regional equity i.e. 208 grants in Balochistan and 191 in Sindh, and value-chain diversification i.e. 18 grants in Banana, 39 in Date, 25 in Grape, 19 in Mango, 07 in Olive, 43 in Onion, 10 in Tomato, 44 in Sheep, 27 in Poultry, 80 in Goat, 87 in Cattle positioning the GRASP project program as a catalyst for enterprise growth, climate-smart transformation, and long-term economic resilience in the target regions.

In addition, disbursement patterns also varied geographically but remained aligned with economic potential and SME readiness. Balochistan's SMEs, particularly in dates, grapes, and livestock received a substantial share of funds i.e. USD 2,647,804, due to the province's strong comparative advantage in these commodities. Sindh, with its dense concentration of mango, banana, onion, and livestock SMEs, also secured significant disbursements i.e. USD 2,617,900 that enabled businesses to upgrade technology, improve value addition, and expand market access. Gender-inclusive disbursement trends show that a considerable portion of the grants awarded to women-led SMEs supported climate-smart technologies, basic infrastructure upgrading, and small-scale mechanization, helping reduce labor burdens and improve productivity.

3.3.3 Business Performance Improvements

Improvement in SME business performance constituted a central outcome of the GRASP project and a key measure of effectiveness for PPAF's interventions under rural and business mobilization, access to finance, and monitoring and evaluation. Business performance improvements were not pursued as isolated outputs, but rather as cumulative outcomes resulting from enterprise mobilization, value chain upgrading, access to tailored financial instruments, and sustained technical and market support delivered by GRASP partners.

At the outcome level, SMEs supported under MG GRASP demonstrated measurable and statistically significant improvements in sales turnover, investment levels, employment generation, and business practices. Tracking surveys confirm that supported SMEs reported an average sales increase of 53% percent overall and 64% for women owned /led SMEs, while average investment levels increased by 68%. Women-led enterprises showed particularly strong performance, with investment growth reaching approximately 86%, reflecting the combined effect of targeted mobilization, financial inclusion measures, and grant-based de-risking.

These improvements are consistent with value chain specific results reported in Section 4. Strong performance gains were observed in livestock (cattle, goats, poultry) and horticulture value chains (dates, mango, vegetables, grapes), where enterprises benefited from integrated interventions including improved production practices, access to upgraded equipment, post-harvest infrastructure, and enhanced market connectivity. In these value chains, business performance improvements were reinforced by climate-smart investments that reduced losses, improved productivity, and stabilized output quality.

Access to Finance played a decisive role in translating enterprise readiness into measurable business growth. Through PPAF-led financial facilitation, 520 SMEs (Annex III for details) accessed over USD 4 million in formal loans, while 399 SMEs received matching grants amounting to USD 5.26 million. These financial resources enabled SMEs to expand operations, invest in productive assets, upgrade technology, and enter higher-value market segments. Enterprises that accessed finance either through loans, matching grants, or blended arrangements reported higher growth trajectories than those receiving non-financial support alone.

Matching grants functioned as a catalytic instrument for business expansion. Grant-supported SMEs invested in machinery, processing units, cold storage, livestock housing, packaging, and quality improvement measures, resulting in increased production volumes and improved market competitiveness. The details of equipment and other procurement by each MG beneficiary SME are included in Annex IV. It’s important to note that these grants were linked to approved business plans and co-investment requirements, ensuring that performance improvements were grounded in commercial viability rather than short-term subsidy effects.

Loan recipients similarly demonstrated strong business outcomes by injecting capital for expanding business operations and infrastructure, machinery and equipment procurement, solar power for business operations, irrigation water, processing, packaging and so on. SMEs accessing formal credit reported increased working capital availability, improved cash flow management, and enhanced ability to respond to seasonal demand and price fluctuations. These improvements are reflected in reported increases in sales turnover and repeat market transactions, particularly among enterprises that transitioned from informal to formal financing channels during the project period.

Employment generation outcomes further reinforce reported business performance improvements. Across GRASP-supported SMEs, increased investment and expansion activities contributed to net job creation, with women and youth accounting for a meaningful share of new employment opportunities. Job creation trends align with sales and investment growth patterns, confirming that business performance gains translated into broader livelihood impacts.

Enterprise behaviour change represents an additional dimension of performance improvement. Outcome surveys indicate improved financial management practices, record keeping, compliance with quality standards, and willingness to engage with formal institutions among supported SMEs. These behavioural shifts are particularly evident among enterprises that participated in access to finance interventions, where compliance with lender and grant requirements reinforced discipline and long-term planning.

PPAF's Monitoring and Evaluation system ensured that business performance improvements were consistently captured and verified across partners and value chains. Standardized indicators, digital data collection, and outcome surveys enabled aggregation of results while avoiding duplication across components. This system provided the evidentiary basis for linking mobilization, finance, and value chain interventions to measurable enterprise-level outcomes.

Overall, business performance improvements under GRASP reflect the effectiveness of an integrated delivery model in which PPAF's mobilization built enterprise readiness, access to finance unlocked growth capital, and M&E safeguarded result integrity. These improvements confirm that GRASP successfully strengthened SME competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability across diverse rural contexts.

3.3.4 Gender Inclusion and Participation Trends in Grants

Gender participation trends indicate that women SMEs are active across all GRASP focused value chains in both regions. The gender analysis shows that out of the total 399 matching grants beneficiary SMEs, 37% i.e. 146 are women owned /led SMEs, one of the beneficiary SMEs is owned /led by a transgender individual and remaining 252 by men. This indicates substantial participation and benefit to women entrepreneurs under the project.

Figure 1: Grants %age by Gender

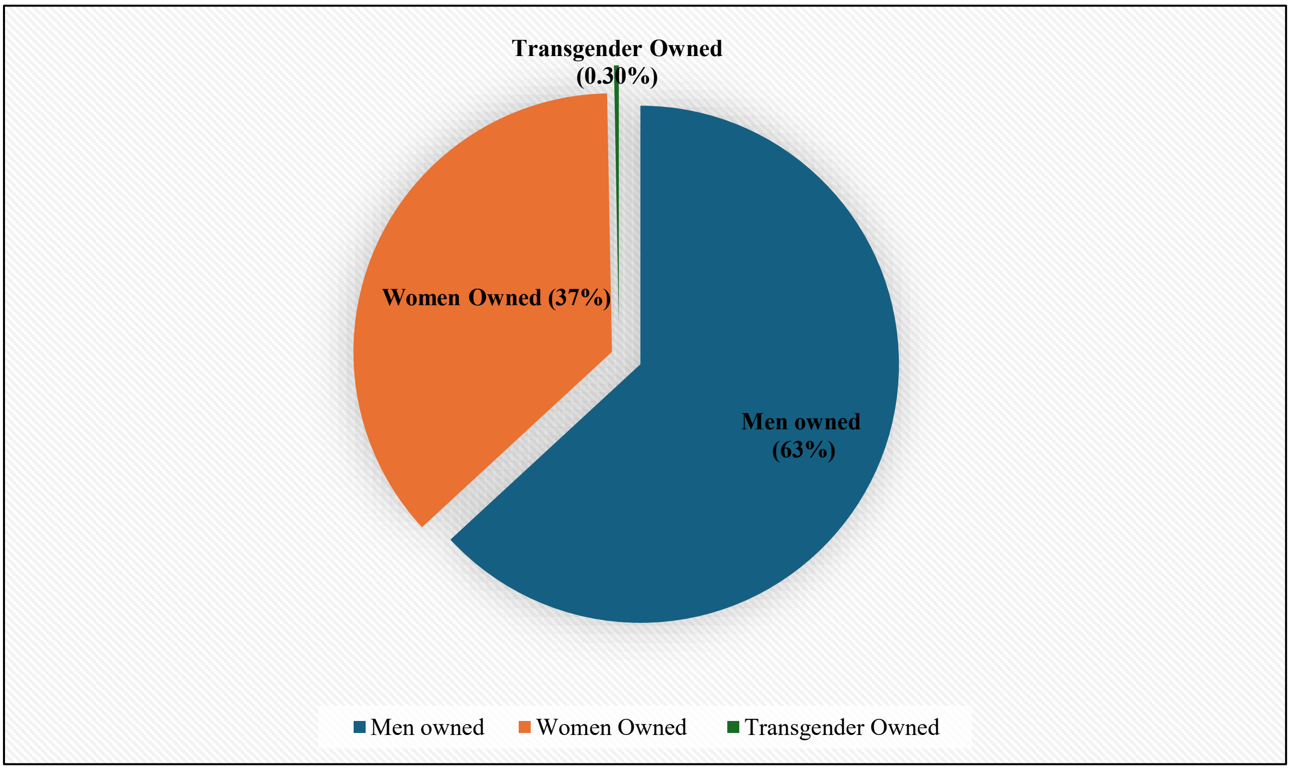
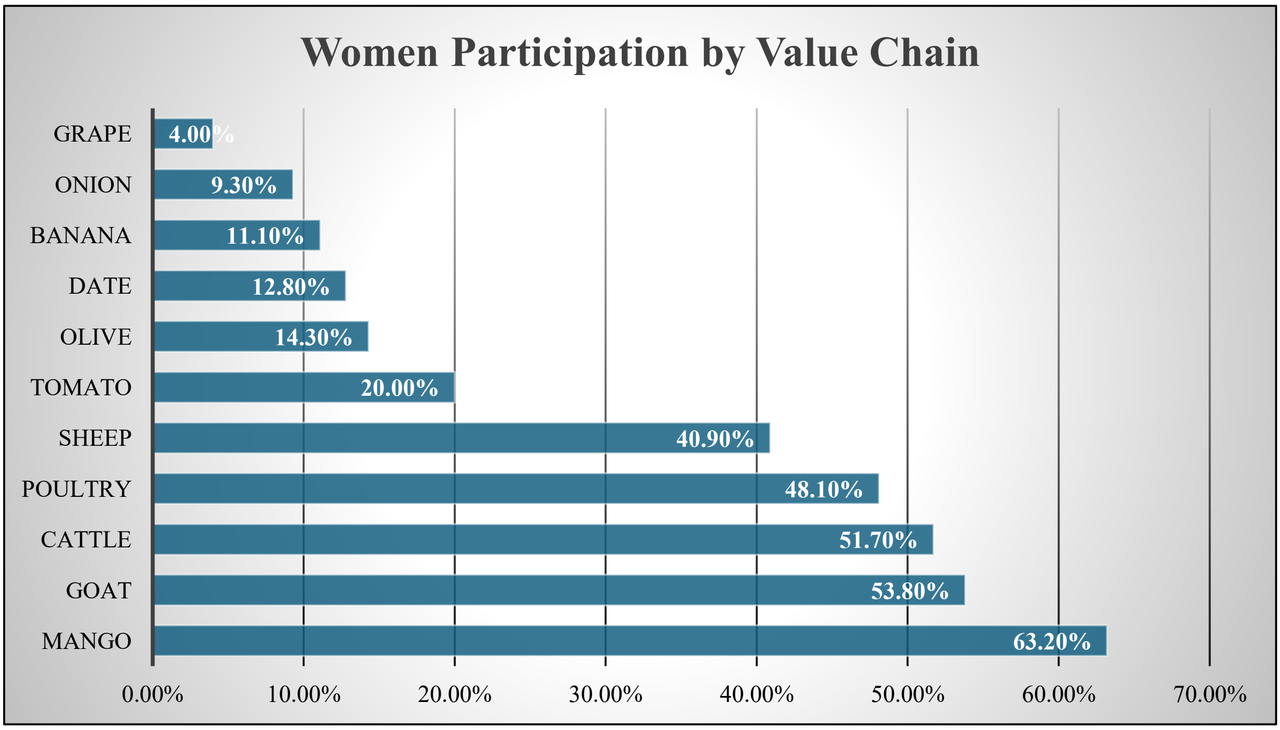


Figure 2: Women Participation by Value chain



The graph above shows that most MG beneficiary women led SMEs were in Cattle value chain i.e. 45 (52%) out of total 87 grants in this value chain. It was followed by Goat value chain at 43 (54%) grants out of 80. The only transgender beneficiary of matching grants is also in Goat value chain. The third most grants received by women were in Sheep value chain which accounted for 18 (41%) out of total 44 grants. It was followed by 13 in poultry (out of 27) and then 12 in Mango (out of 19 grants). However, the highest %age of grants secured by women within a given value chain was in Mango, where women secured 63% of grants i.e. 12 out of 19, followed by Goat at 54% (43 out of 80), then Cattle 52% (45 out of 87), in poultry 48% (13 out of 27) and in Sheep 41% (18 out of 44). Women also received grants across all other GRASP focused value chains i.e. 02 grants (out of 10) in Tomato, 04 (out of 43) in onion, 01 (out of 07) in Olive, 01 (out of 25) in Grape, 05 (out of 39) in Date and finally 02 (out of 18) in Banana.

A notable accomplishment was the 44% (38% in Balochistan and 48% in Sindh) of 1,091 women owned /led SMEs benefiting from capacity-building initiatives under the access to finance component of GRASP. This underscored the project's commitment to an inclusive and gender-responsive approach to implementation. Women entrepreneurs gained essential financial management skills that strengthened their role in business decision-making and reduced reliance on informal financial systems. These enhanced capabilities enabled women to prepare stronger business plans, manage risks more effectively, and pursue new market opportunities. This empowerment generated positive ripple effects at the community level by contributing to household economic stability, diversification of income sources, and increased women's agency within value chains where they have historically been underrepresented.

Overall, the percentage distribution suggests that livestock-related value chains i.e. goat, cattle, poultry and sheep offered greater grants /finance /access to finance related opportunities for women as compared to horticultural value chains.

3.3.5 Capacity Building, Financial Literacy, and Business Readiness

PPAF, by engaging expert firms and ToT of its PO staff, extended crucial financial literacy support to SMEs in both Sindh and Balochistan. This was key limitation especially for smaller enterprises /primary producers and thus extended a basic but key skill for effective business operations and profitability. The GRASP project achieved significant impact in strengthening SME capacities, with 1,091 enterprises 505 (192 Women) in Balochistan and 586 (283 Women) were in Sindh more than double the target of 500 receiving training in financial literacy and business planning.

Through targeted training, coaching sessions, and exposure visits, SMEs gained practical skills in budgeting, record-keeping, cash-flow management, cost analysis, and investment planning. This improved their ability to manage and sustain their businesses while enhancing their understanding of financial products, lending requirements, and formal banking procedures. As a result, SMEs became more confident and better prepared to engage with financial institutions.

Enhanced business planning skills enabled SMEs to prepare realistic and data-driven business plans, assess risks effectively, and make informed decisions related to expansion and technology upgrades. These strengthened capabilities directly improved their creditworthiness, as enterprises could demonstrate structured financial practices and clear growth strategies when seeking formal finance. The capacity-building efforts therefore not only improved day-to-day financial management but also promoted long-term sustainability by enabling SMEs to access credit, diversify income sources, and adopt climate-smart innovations.

Overall, literacy and capacity-building interventions resulted in more resilient, better-managed enterprises, stronger linkages between SMEs and financial institutions, and enhanced gender inclusion. These outcomes collectively contributed to improved credit readiness and long-term economic empowerment across the horticulture and livestock sectors. These achievements position the project as a catalyst for long-term economic empowerment and climate-resilient development in the target regions of Sindh and Balochistan.

4 Progress by Value Chain

This Project Completion Report presents progress through consolidated value chain results, reflecting how project-supported interventions strengthened different segments of the value chain, including production, aggregation, processing, and marketing. Project's initial value-chain analyses, which informed the identification of priority value chains and key constraints affecting rural SMEs, the GRASP Project adopted an integrated value chain approach to drive progress across production, processing, and marketing stages. Core constraints related to access to finance, limited technology adoption, weak market linkages, and informality were addressed through a combination of financial linkages, matching grants, loans and complemented by technical capacity building, business development services, market exposure through fairs and expos, and formalization support. Progress is therefore consolidated and reported at value-chain level, reflecting how these combined interventions strengthened enterprise performance, competitiveness, and market integration across targeted value-chain subsectors.

Access to finance (A2F) plays a pivotal role in the strengthening of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and value chain subsectors by supporting their growth, competitiveness, and sustainability. Without adequate financial resources, even the most promising SMEs struggle to expand operations in the existing market and enter the new market, adopt new technologies, or respond to National and International Market demands. With sufficient capital, SMEs can invest in research and development, product diversification, and technology adoption, helping them adapt to evolving market needs and environmental challenges. Financial inclusion also enables them to introduce climate-resilient infrastructure and technologies, and build operational efficiency, strengthen vertical and horizontal linkages, making the entire ecosystem more robust and cohesive. A2F for SMEs exists in multiple forms including debt, equity, grants, guarantees, Islamic financing, blended finance, and digital or alternative instruments. Each serves a distinct purpose such as debt provides working capital, equity fuels innovation and growth, grants and matching grants mitigate risks, guarantees attract private capital and digital tools to expand inclusion for underserved enterprises.

Under the EU-funded GRASP Project, A2F primarily focused on linking SMEs with financial institutions and providing matching grants. Such linkages bridge the financing gap that often prevents rural enterprises from scaling or modernizing. Partnerships with commercial banks, microfinance institutions, micro finance banks and other intermediaries helped rural SMEs access affordable credit and innovative financing solutions tailored to their needs. These engagements also encourage financial institutions to explore rural markets, fostering inclusive growth. Matching grants are non-refundable funds combining donor support, and SMEs' own contributions, serving as a key instrument for promoting innovation and risk mitigation. Moreover, facilitating access to finance also supported the formalization of SMEs, enabling them to open bank accounts, register with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), and maintain audited financial records. These practices foster transparency, creditworthiness, and access to larger funding opportunities. Over time, it promoted behavioral change, financial discipline, and a culture of compliance laying the foundation for a more resilient, documented, and growth-oriented SME sector.

The value chain approach is a broad development methodology that analyses and strengthens all interconnected actors and functions involved in the production, processing, and marketing of a product. It focuses on improving efficiency, coordination, competitiveness, and market linkages across the entire chain, from input suppliers and producers to processors, traders, and buyers. Access to finance (A2F) within a value chain framework is one component among many, alongside technology adoption, quality improvement, skills development, and policy reforms. The aim is systemic transformation that benefits all actors and enhances the overall performance of the sector. However, the GRASP Project adopted the value chain approach as its foundation and applied it in a practical, targeted, and SME centered manner across rural Sindh and Balochistan. GRASP specifically focused on strengthening rural SMEs within selected value chain subsectors i.e. banana, dates, mango, olive, grape, tomato, onion, cattle, goat, sheep, and poultry through direct interventions including training, market linkages, business development services, formalization support, and access to finance, particularly via financial linkages and matching grants.

Through these actions, GRASP mobilized SMEs, built their capacities, reduced investment risks, enhanced competitiveness, and connected them to markets and financial institutions. Across all value chains, 45,726 SMEs (of which 63% men and 37% are women) were identified, and a database built for partners to identify and engage most suitable for respective GRASP interventions. A total of 399 matching grants worth USD 5.26 million and 593 loans to 520 SMEs worth USD 4.012 million were disbursed across all GRASP focused value chains. The loan distribution is balanced between horticulture (48%) and livestock (52%), reflecting GRASP's integrated approach to strengthening rural enterprises and inclusive economic development. The following table depicts the value chain wise investment through matching grant and access to finance (A2F).

Table 13: Loans & Grants by Valuechain

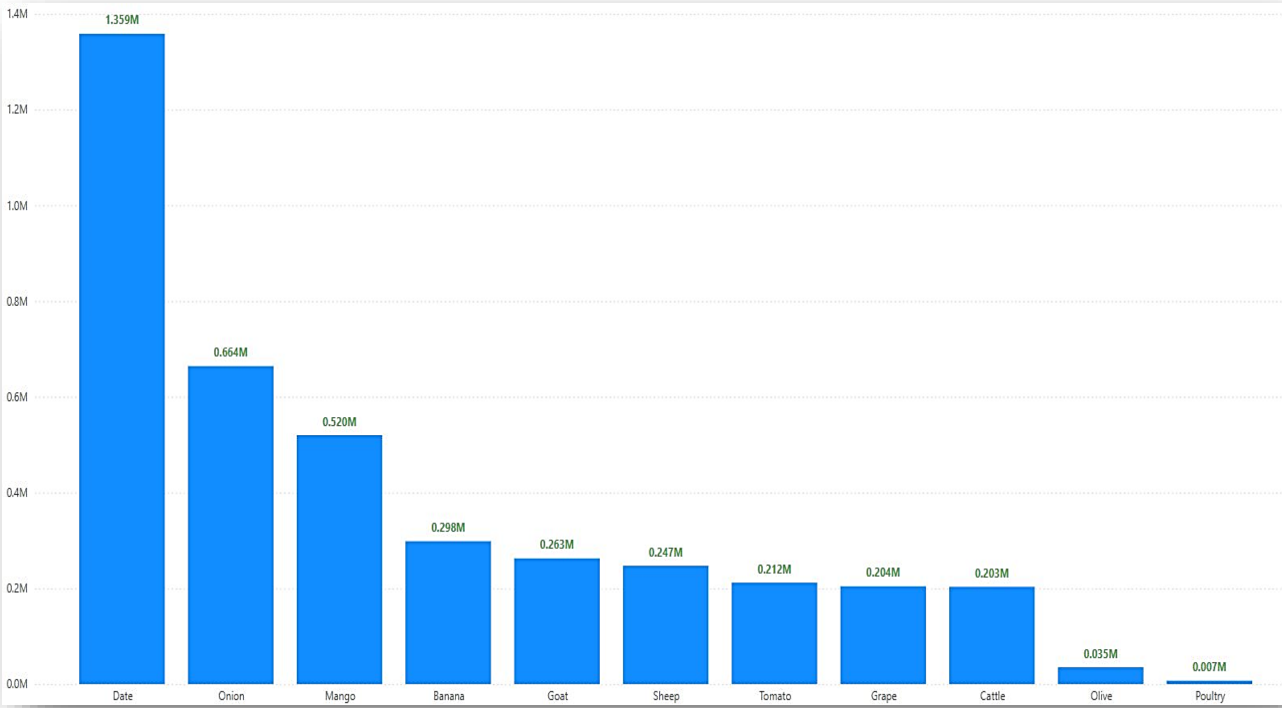
Province	Value Chain	No. of SME	Loan Amount		No. of SMEs	Matching Grant Disbursed Amount (Cumulative)	
			Loan Amount (PKR)	Loan Amount (USD)		MG Amount (PKR)	MG Amount (USD)
Sindh	Banana	20	81,841,897	298,437	18	123,000,000	520,717
	Cattle	149	53,264,115	197,835	87	88,500,000	352,929
	Date	28	314,822,500	1,131,292	14	177,000,000	687,318
	Goat	28	1,367,500	4,888	31	21,500,000	87,405
	Mango	11	160,619,879	520,015	19	146,500,000	563,178
	Onion	12	10,113,463	36,069	12	37,500,000	140,104
	Tomato	41	59,596,326	211,919	10	64,000,000	266,249
Sub-Total		**289**	**681,625,680**	**2,400,456**	**191**	**658,000,000**	**2,617,900**
Balochistan	Date	29	63,683,350	227,211	25	194,500,000	736,117
	Goat	72	71,888,595	263,205	49	83,000,000	323,848
	Grape	24	54,635,000	204,362	25	91,500,000	400,860
	Olive	5	10,000,000	35,237	7	52,500,000	225,179
	Onion	86	170,203,550	628,184	31	121,000,000	475,223
	Poultry	1	2,000,000	7,017	27	49,000,000	214,922
	Sheep	25	69,485,000	247,301	44	69,500,000	271,655
Sub-Total		**242**	**441,895,795**	**1,612,520**	**208**	**661,000,000**	**2,647,804**
TOTAL		**531**[8]	**1,123,521,175**	**4,012,976**	**399**	**1,319,000,000**	**5,265,704**

A total of 593 loans were secured by 520 SMEs across Balochistan and Sindh, demonstrating the project's significant outreach. In Balochistan, participation remains largely men-driven, where from

[8] Due to multiple loans availed by some SMEs in different value chains, the SME count has duplication and hence the total 531 instead of 520.

the total 241 beneficiary SMEs, 191 were men led /owned SMEs who also mobilized 92% of total loan size (i.e. USD 1,477,638 out of USD 1,612,520)) compared to 50 women owned /led SMEs. Sindh presents a contrasting trend, where women's participation is higher 164 women versus 115 men indicating more inclusive engagement in the province. However, in terms of loan size, the larger share of finance i.e. 96% (USD 2,307,052 out of total USD 2,400, 457) was mobilized by men.

Figure 3: Loan Amount by Value Chain



The outcome tracking exercise of 21,419 GRASP beneficiary SMEs done by M&E team shows that across all value chains, total investment (accessed) increased from PKR 9.28 billion to PKR 12.55 billion, a 35% increase. This transformative growth reflects enhanced financial inclusion, stronger market systems, and the catalytic role of green technology adoption in building bankable and climate-resilient agricultural enterprises. Men led/owned SMEs saw a strong 35% increase (from PKR 7.519 billion to PKR 10.12 billion), while women led/owned SMEs were slightly ahead with 38% increase (PKR 1.75 billion to PKR 2.42 billion), demonstrating meaningful progress in women's economic empowerment. The outcome tracking survey results show that these SMEs showed a robust 56% increase in sales turnover, rising from PKR 14.29 billion to PKR 22.34 billion. Men led/owned SMEs recorded 51% growth (PKR 11.79 billion to PKR 17.83 billion), while women led/owned SMEs achieved a strong 80% increase (PKR 2.50 billion to PKR 4.49 billion), significant boost in women's economic contribution. The most increase in sales turnover was recorded in a goat (172%) value chain followed by poultry (123%), and then cattle (58%). The outcome surveys also showed that across all value chains, the project sustained 39,906 FTE jobs (28,254 men, 11,643 women, 09 transgender), within horticulture sector it was 25,132 jobs and in livestock 14,774. Women's participation in FTE is around 29%.

The outcome-level performance of GRASP-supported SMEs has clear and reinforcing implications for food security across Sindh and Balochistan. The 35% increase in total investment accessed by

21,820 beneficiary SMEs alongside a 56% rise in sales turnover indicates a significant expansion in productive capacity, market supply, and value chain efficiency across both livestock and horticulture systems, directly contributing to improved availability and stability of food supplies. Particularly strong growth in food-relevant value chains such as goat, poultry, and cattle suggests enhanced production and commercialization of nutrient-dense foods, while the sustained creation of nearly 40,000 full-time equivalent jobs strengthens household purchasing power and economic access to food, especially for women, who accounted for 29% of total FTE employment. The stronger relative gains among women-led SMEs further reinforce food security outcomes, as women's income growth is closely associated with improved household food consumption and dietary diversity. These enterprise-level gains were complemented by GRASP's distribution of improved wheat seed to 13,500 primary producers, which directly supported staple crop productivity and resilience at farm level, thereby reinforcing food availability and buffering against climate and market shocks. Taken together, increased agricultural production, higher rural incomes, expanded employment, and improved staple crop performance demonstrate how GRASP contributed to food security not only through direct production effects but also through strengthened livelihoods, resilient market systems, and inclusive economic participation.

Across GRASP-supported value chains, integrated rural and business mobilization, combined with targeted financial facilitation and market-oriented capacity building, translated directly into local economic growth by strengthening enterprise viability, expanding incomes, and deepening market integration. The formation of Farmer Climate Business Schools (FCBS), Farmer Market Collectives (FMCs), expos and networking events enabled SMEs and primary producers to access higher-value domestic and export markets. Substantial increases in investment (ranging from 24% to over 49% across value chains) and sales turnover (from 24% in emerging chains such as grapes to over 170% in goats and 58% in cattle) demonstrate improved commercial performance and sustained profitability, reinforcing SMEs' bankability and resilience. Matching grants and access-to-finance facilitation catalyzed investment in processing, storage, packaging, and green technologies, enabling value addition, reduced post-harvest losses, and improved price realization. These gains were accompanied by large-scale employment effects, over 40,000 FTE jobs across value chains with particularly strong participation of women in labor-intensive activities such as grading, packing, processing, and livestock management, directly contributing to household incomes and local demand. Collectively, the value chain interventions strengthened backward and forward market linkages, embedded SMEs more firmly within regional and national markets, and generated durable income and employment multipliers that underpin inclusive and sustained local economic growth in Sindh and Balochistan.

The value-chain-specific analysis based on the first round of outcome tracking data is included on the following pages:

4.1 Date Value Chain

Across Khairpur (Sindh) and Turbat, Panjgur, and Kech (Balochistan), the date growing target areas for the project, through an inclusive rural mobilization strategy, PPAF supported and facilitated FAO in identifying and validating primary producers /SMEs for forming Farmer Climate Business School (FCBS) and Farmer Market Collectives (FMCs). These platforms enabled collective growth, strengthened local networking, and built market linkages to foster business sustainability.

Mobilization activities in these districts covered by PPAF POs GSF in Sindh and SPO in Balochistan focused on community-level engagement with a focus on women, youth, and smallholder farmers. POs played a key role in beneficiary identification, validation, technical capacity building, and facilitating market connections. Collaborations with FAO, ITC, SMEDA, and CABI enabled targeted trainings in CSA, Agri-Business Management, SheTrades, Marketing, Quality Management, and Post-Harvest Handling, and supported in business formalization through registration with FBR and SECP, enhancing their access to finance and markets.

This comprehensive support model has contributed to a more resilient, inclusive, and climate-smart engagement of SMEs /primary producers in Dates value chain, laying a strong foundation for sustainable Date growth and processing in Sindh and Balochistan. In the project MIS-SME database, PPAF POs identified and entered detailed data of about 8,202 SMEs (2,707 i.e. 33% women led /owned SME) working in Date value chain. Dates are a high-value crop with strong export demand (especially to the Middle East and Europe), offering opportunities for processing units (dryers, packers).

The sector demonstrates strong participation in both SME development and financial literacy initiatives. It also secured 39 (25 in Balochistan and 14 in Sindh) matching grants (05 women) amounting to USD 1,423,435, reflecting growing investment in processing, packaging, storage and marketing activities that enhance product value and export potential. With PPAF GRASP A2F facilitation, SMEs in Date value chain have the largest loan portfolio: i.e. USD 1.35 million by 57 SMEs (29 Balochistan, 28 Sindh). Of these 20 are women owned /led SMEs.

The outcome survey shows that date value chain investments increased from PKR 1,766 million to PKR 2,288 million, a solid 30% rise. This significant growth underscores the sector's rising commercial viability and the positive impact of green technology adoption on attracting greater financial resources. The outcome survey further confirms that SMEs in the Date value chain recorded a 26% rise in sales turnover, from PKR 2.70 billion to PKR 3.42 billion. Steady growth highlights improved processing and packaging capabilities, enabling producers to capture greater value in both domestic and export markets. Project beneficiary SMEs tracked through outcome survey indicated SMEs in Date value chain supported 6,586 FTE jobs (551 women). Women's involvement underscores the sector's contribution to gender-equitable income opportunities, in Sindh and Balochistan. With project support and facilitation in terms of grants, loans and trainings /technical capacity building, upgraded processing facilities and export-oriented value addition made the sector highly attractive to financial institutions, driving substantial new investments.

4.2 Onion Value Chain

The Onion Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project aimed to strengthen SMEs operating in and around onion production, processing and marketing in both Sindh and Balochistan in districts of Hyderabad, Khairpur, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Nawabshah, Sanghar, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Kharan, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Nushki, Panjgur, and Zhob. The rural and business mobilization approach actively engaged communities for identification of SMEs /primary producers working in onion production and related value chain activities, with a total of 5,578 (1,129 i.e. 20% women) records entered in project SME-database.

Mobilization in this value chain also involved awareness /orientation to project and identification /facilitation in capacity building specifically for CSA, grants, loans and other project initiatives with active support to FAO in identification and selection for aggregation into FCBS and FMCs. The SMEs benefited from tailored capacity-building programs in processing and post-harvest management, business management, and financial literacy including business plan development and pitching.

Through integrated mobilization, financial facilitation, market linkages, and adoption of climate-smart practices, the Onion Value Chain initiative enhanced SME competitiveness, strengthened rural economies, and supported sustainable agricultural development across Sindh and Balochistan.

43 SMEs (04 Women) in Onion value chain i.e. 31 in Balochistan and 12 in Sindh received Matching Grants totaling USD 615,327. The strong financial backing and near-universal uptake highlight onion cultivation as a priority area for climate-smart vegetable farming. 98 SMEs in onion value chain were successfully facilitated by the A2F team in securing a total loan of USD 664,254, with an average loan size of USD 6,778. Loans were primarily acquired for climate smart /controlled storage and packaging /crate procurement to mitigate price volatility.

The outcome survey shows that SMEs in onion value chain recorded a 33% increase in investments, i.e. from PKR 1,512 million to PKR 2,005 million. This trend reflects enhanced trust from financial institutions and better repayment capacity among onion growers, supported by improved production and marketing systems. The data also showed that onion sales turnover also grew by 33%, from PKR 1,856 million to PKR 2,473 million. Consistent demand and reduced post-harvest losses drove the increase, demonstrating the impact of climate-smart storage and transport solutions on vegetable profitability. The outcome survey shows that SMEs in onion value chain amongst GRASP beneficiary SMEs emerged as the largest employer, sustaining 7,630 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with 3069 women and 1 transgender. Strong participation of women in grading, sorting, and marketing activities highlights onion's critical role in providing inclusive rural employment and stable livelihoods across both Sindh and Balochistan.

4.3. Tomato Value Chain

In GRASP project, the SMEs in tomato Value Chain were focused specifically in the districts of Hyderabad, Karachi, Sujawal, Tando Muhammad Khan, and Thatta in Sindh province. The rural and business mobilization strategy encouraged SMEs in this value chain to participate and benefit from project support for enhanced income and business activities. The SME identification by local POs resulted in registering data records of 4,372 SMEs /primary producers in GRASP SME database with a total of 2,623 (37%) women records. Mobilization efforts included awareness sessions, beneficiary identification for skills development and aggregation into FCBS and FMCs. These SMEs benefited from comprehensive capacity-building programs, including CSA, processing and post-harvest management, business management, and financial literacy with business plan development and pitching for those who competed in matching grants process.

Through integrated mobilization, financial facilitation, market linkages, and adoption of climate-smart practices, the Tomato Value Chain initiative successfully enhanced SME competitiveness, promoted gender-inclusive participation, and supported sustainable rural economic growth in Sindh.

A total of 10 SMEs received Matching Grants of USD 266,249 in Tomato Value chain. While financing was provided, the limited uptake indicates a need for intensified technical assistance and awareness to accelerate sustainable practices in this important vegetable value chain.

The outcome survey data shows that the investments in tomato value chain grew by 44%, from PKR 555 million to PKR 799 million. Despite earlier lower green-tech adoption, strong financial growth suggests improving market dynamics and potential for further sustainable intensification. The survey further confirms that tomatoes achieved an impressive 51% sales growth, from PKR 834 million to PKR 1,258 million. The sharp rise signals successful adoption of protected cultivation and direct market connections, overcoming earlier low green-tech uptake to deliver high returns. Protected cultivation and direct buyer contracts generated rapid revenue growth, enabling producers to secure substantially larger seasonal and investment loans. The data also shows that tomato supported 3,099 FTE jobs (1,107 women), driven by intensive protected cultivation and frequent harvesting cycles. The chain offered consistent daily-wage opportunities, particularly boosting women’s participation in planting and picking.

4.4. Goat Value Chain

The Goat Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project strengthened rural SMEs in terms of climate-resilient livestock production across Sindh and Balochistan, covering the districts of Kech, Khairpur, Kharan, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Musakhel, Nawabshah, Nushki, Panjgur, Pishin, Sanghar, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tharparkar, and Zhob. Rural and business mobilization identified 6,141 SMEs engaged in goat farming and enterprise activities, with a bulk 53% i.e. 3,262 women records entered in project SME-database helping ensure high gender inclusion. Mobilization efforts as for other value chains concentrated on awareness and

facilitation /support in identification for different project supported skills development, capacity building, exposure, networking and organization into FCBS and FMCs.

Through integrated mobilization, targeted training, financial support, and market facilitation, the Goat Value Chain initiative under GRASP successfully promoted and supported active SMEs, gender participation, and sustainable livestock development in Sindh and Balochistan.

Through the matching grants activity 80 SMEs in goat value chain received grant amount equaling USD 411,253 and showed a solid 66% of these adopting green technology. The widespread participation and strong uptake highlight the sector’s potential for scalable, climate-resilient livestock development, particularly in rural and arid regions. Key interventions include breed improvement, meat production, climate-controlled sheds and live-animal trading. In the same value chain with A2F facilitation 100 SMEs successfully mobilized a total loan amount of USD 268,093, with an average loan size of USD 2,680. Expanding goat-focused microfinance partnerships and introducing livestock insurance bundled with matching grants for communal sheds which had accelerated inclusion.

The outcome survey shows that the goat value chain experienced a 35% rise in investment access, growing from PKR 827 million to PKR 1,117 million. This notable improvement signals increased formal financing penetration in small-ruminant livestock, contributing to livelihood resilience in rural areas. The survey further confirms that goat sales turnover jumped 171%, from PKR 1,212 million to PKR 3284 million. Higher off-take rates and better pricing for live animals and meat reflect improved herd management and stronger linkages with urban markets. The outcome survey tells that goat rearing generated 6,033 FTE jobs (2,482 women), offering flexible employment suited to pastoral communities. The chain’s labor-intensive herding and marketing activities provided year-round income, especially for landless households in arid zones.

4.5. Banana Value Chain

The Banana Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project focused on fostering sustainable and inclusive rural economic growth in the districts of Hyderabad, Karachi, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Tando Allahyar, and Tando Muhammad Khan in Sindh. Through structured rural and business mobilization, local communities were engaged in identifying SMEs active in banana growth, processing and marketing. As a result, local partners collected data of about 2,636 SMEs of and recorded that in GRASP SME-database. Mobilization efforts included identifying primary banana producers and SMEs for supporting FAO in aggregating them into FCBS and FMCs.

Through integrated rural mobilization, capacity development, financial facilitation, and market linkages, the Banana Value Chain initiative successfully enhanced SME competitiveness, promoted gender participation, and supported sustainable, market-driven rural economic growth in Sindh.

In Banana value chain, 18 SMEs (02 Women) received a total grant amount of USD 520,717. All of these had some part of grant invested into green technologies. The sector demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainable practices, making it one of the most environmentally progressive value chains in the program despite its relatively modest scale. With A2F team facilitation, 20 SMEs in Banana value chain also mobilized loan equaling USD 298,437 with an average loan size of USD 1,4921.

The outcome survey shows that banana SMEs saw investments increase from PKR 1,249 million to PKR 1,604 million, marking a 28% increase. The consistent upward trend highlights improved access to finance and greater investor confidence in the banana sector, driven by sustainable practices and market demand. The survey also shows that banana annual sales turnover rose 46%, from PKR 2,422 million to PKR 3,544 million. The strong increase reflects enhanced quality standards and better access to premium markets, rewarding the sector's full adoption of green technologies with substantial commercial gains. The outcome survey data indicates that these SMEs also sustained 2,849 FTE jobs. Year-round harvesting and packing operations delivered steady employment, with women playing key roles in bunch covering, de-handing, and pack-house grading.

4.6. Mango Value Chain

The Mango Value Chain interventions under the GRASP Project were focused in select UCs of Hyderabad, Karachi, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, and Tando Allahyar districts of Sindh. Through the business mobilization intervention PPAF's POs identified and recorded data (in project SME-database) of 2,467 primary producers and SMEs working around Mango. The mobilization process included awareness-raising about project and through it participation and benefit from different interventions including support to FAO in identifying and validating suitable SMEs & primary producers for FCBS and FMCs. These structures supported knowledge-sharing, production, and marketing coordination at the grassroots level.

19 (12 women) Primary producers and SMEs in Mango value chain received grant amounting to a total of USD 563,178. Of these 14 also invested in green technologies as part of their business plan. 11(04 Women) SMEs in this value chain also secured loan worth USD 520,015.

The outcome survey shows that mango value chain recorded investment increase of about 49% i.e. from PKR 788 million to 1173.8 million. This substantial jump reflects strengthened market linkages and enhanced financial access for mango producers, reinforcing mango as the top-performing value chain in terms of capital mobilization post-intervention. Further the survey found there was a 54% surge in sales turnover, climbing from PKR 3,201 million to PKR 4,923 million. This outstanding growth underscores strengthened market linkages, improved post-harvest handling, and higher price realization, solidifying mango as the program's top revenue generator. In terms of jobs, it sustained 3,309 FTE jobs (483 women). From pruning to harvesting and packing, the sector created seasonal yet high-value employment, with growing roles for women in pack-house operations and quality control.

4.7. Sheep Value Chain

The Sheep Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project aimed to improve and promote climate-resilient livestock production in Balochistan, specifically across the districts of Kharan, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Musakhel, Nushki, Pishin, Quetta, and Zhob. POs identified and registered in GRASP database records of 4,291 SMEs operational in sheep value chain of 2,076 i.e. 48% are women. As for other value chains, the SMEs in sheep value chain received the same orientation and facilitation for benefiting from GRASP project including helping FAO in formation of FCBS and FMCs and in participation and benefit from other activities including training, exposure and networking.

In the Sheep value chain 44 SMEs (18 women) received matching grants through a competitive process, totaling to USD 271,655. Of the 44, a substantial number i.e. 32, had green tech as part of approved plan. Another 25 SMEs were facilitated in mobilizing loans worth USD 247,301, with an average size of USD 9,892. Enhanced breeding, meat processing and wool marketing initiatives turned sheep farming into a reliable repayment proposition, attracting greater formal finance in pastoral areas.

The outcome survey shows that supported SMEs in this value chain increased investment by 41% from PKR 281 million to PKR 398 million. The sharp rise reflects growing recognition of sheep farming as a viable and bankable enterprise, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. The survey data shows that annual sales turnover in this value chain increased by 46%, from PKR 302 million to PKR 440 million. Outcome survey shows that sheep farming sustained /generated 2,258 FTE jobs (952women), primarily in grazing, shearing, and market preparation. The chain offered supplementary income for agro-pastoral families, with women actively engaged in wool processing and lamb care.

4.8. Cattle Value Chain

The Cattle Value Chain interventions under the GRASP Project were focused in districts of Hyderabad, Khairpur, Matiari, Mirpur Khas, Nawabshah, Sanghar, Sujawal, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tharparkar, and Thatta in Sindh. Rural and business mobilization actively engaged communities to identify suitable SMEs in livestock production and enterprise activities, as a result collecting standard data of 3,774 of which 50% are women and entered it into GRASP SME-database to help project partners in identifying suitable SMEs for engaging in different GRASP activities including CSL by FAO.

Through integrated mobilization, capacity-building, financial facilitation, and market linkages, the Cattle Value Chain initiative under GRASP successfully enhanced rural entrepreneurship, strengthened women's participation, and supported climate-resilient livestock-based economic growth in Sindh.

Cattle emerged as the leading value chain in terms of matching grant awards, where a total of 87 SMEs (45 women) received a total of USD 352,929 in Matching Grants. Of these, 75 enterprises (86%) integrated green technologies, reflecting significant progress toward sustainable livestock management and positioning cattle as a cornerstone of both economic impact and environmental responsibility within the initiative. Cattle is also the top-performing value chain in terms of securing loans from FIs with A2F PPAF GRASP facilitation. 150 SMEs (96 women) secured loans totaling to USD 203,211, translating to an average loan size of USD 1355.

The outcome survey data shows that investments in cattle value chain by beneficiary SMEs rose from PKR 833 million to PKR 1186 million, a 42% increase. The substantial growth highlights the sector's critical role in dairy and meat value chains and the effectiveness of interventions in unlocking larger credit volumes for cattle owners. The survey confirms that cattle annual sales turnover soared 58%, from PKR 911million to PKR 1441 million. Increased milk yields and better fattening practices translated into significantly higher income for dairy and beef producers. The outcome survey shows that cattle enterprises supported /sustained 4,307 FTE jobs (1,507 women), centered on milking, feed preparation, and calf rearing. Rising commercial dairy units created stable jobs, with women increasingly involved in milk processing and value addition.

4.9. Grape Value Chain

The Grape Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project aimed to enhance rural economic growth and promote climate-smart agriculture in Balochistan, specifically in the districts of Nushki, Pishin, Quetta, and Zhob. Through targeted rural and business mobilization, the project engaged local communities and identified 1,713 (146 women) primary producers /SMEs and entered their details into project database. The purpose was same, to help SMEs in benefiting from project interventions such as FCBS, FMCs, exposure, trainings, grants, loan etc.

25 SMEs in this value chain received grants totaling USD 400,860, with 19 of them also having a provision /allocation for adopting green technologies. The investment reflects targeted efforts to enhance sustainability in viticulture, balancing commercial viability with environmental stewardship in a high-value horticultural crop. 24 SMEs also mobilized loans equaling USD 204,362 with average loan size of USD 8515. Loans were mostly provided for trellising and packing improvement.

The outcome survey of supported SMEs shows that grape gained a modest 24% increase in investment from PKR 542 million to PKR 675 million. The survey further confirms that grape annual sales grew by 24%, from PKR 523 million to PKR 647 million. Gradual improvement indicates emerging quality upgrades and niche market penetration, with potential for faster growth in coming seasons. The survey also showed grape cultivation sustained /provided 1,547 (144 women) FTE jobs.

4.10. Poultry Value Chain

In GRASP Project poultry interventions were centered in districts of Kech, Kharan, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Nushki, Pishin, and Zhob. A total of 3,076 SMEs including 2,465 (80%) women were identified by POs and registered in GRASP database. Mobilization included awareness sessions, and supporting and facilitating project partners in selecting suitable beneficiaries form the database for support under GRASP such as arrangement in FMC, FCBS, loans, grants, trainings etc.

Through integrated mobilization, targeted training, financial facilitation, and market linkages, the Poultry Value Chain initiative under GRASP successfully strengthened rural poultry enterprises, enhanced gender-inclusive participation, and contributed to climate-resilient, market-driven poultry production in Balochistan.

27 (13 women) poultry related SMEs received matching grants totaling USD 214,922, with 22 also investing in adoption of green technologies. The investment supports a shift toward more sustainable poultry production systems, contributing to both food security and reduced environmental impact in the livestock sector. A single loan worth USD 7,018 was also mobilized by a poultry-based SME.

The outcome survey shows that the supported SMEs in poultry sector increased investment by 60% post GRASP interventions, jumping from PKR 44 million to PKR 70 million. This remarkable increase demonstrates rapid scaling of commercial poultry operations and strong demand-driven financial uptake. The survey shows that poultry annual sales rose 33%, from PKR 59.40 million to PKR 79.03 million. The survey shows that poultry sustained 2,164 FTE jobs (1018 women), driven by daily feeding, egg collection, and marketing tasks. Backyard and semi-commercial units provided flexible, home-based income opportunities, particularly empowering rural women.

4.11. Olive Value Chain

The Olive Value Chain intervention under the GRASP Project aimed to strengthen rural olive production and processing activities by promoting climate-smart agricultural practices in Balochistan, in the districts of Khuzdar, Musakhel, and Zhob. The rural and business mobilization process engaged local communities to identify suitable enterprises, in this case 853 (150 women) active in this value chain. Through integrated mobilization, financial facilitation, market linkages, and capacity-building support, FCBS and FMC, the Olive Value Chain initiative strengthened rural entrepreneurship, increased SME competitiveness, and promoted sustainable agricultural growth in Balochistan.

Olive had the smallest cohort of only 07 (01 woman) SMEs receiving grants totaling USD 225,179 under the Matching Grants, however this focused support signals a strategic push to establish a fully sustainable foundation for this emerging high-value crop. Olive is an emerging crop with great business potential. A2F teams worked with SMEs in this value chain and helped them secure loans. As a result of this facilitation, 05 SMEs mobilized a total of USD 35,237 in loans with an average loan size of USD 7,047. Small sizes of loans reflect early-stage grafting and nursery investments.

The outcome survey shows that olive recorded a 49% increase in investment growth, from PKR 156 million to PKR 233 million. Though starting from a smaller base, the steady growth signals emerging investors' interest in this high-value niche crop with long-term sustainability potential. Further the data shows a 44% sales increase, i.e. from PKR 120 million to PKR 173 million. As a nascent value chain, the modest increase still marks important early progress in establishing market presence for locally produced olive oil and table olives. The survey shows that Olive related SMEs sustained 719 FTE jobs (149 women), driven by olive bi products, grading and sorting of olives, oil extractions and marketing tasks.

5 Cross-Cutting Themes

5.1 Gender and Social Inclusion

The GRASP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy was followed across all outputs of the project including work by PPAF and its POs, achieving consistent women representation in all capacity building, training, exposure, access to finance events for different stakeholders including SMEs and government departments. Measures were taken to ensure inclusion of women's voices as GRASP continued supporting the government of Sindh and Balochistan in updating Policies and Acts to be more conducive to SMEs development. Public Private Dialogues (PPD) were held by ITC and facilitated /supported by PPAF, its POs and other project partners in both provinces to understand the challenges for women SMEs. GRASP project had special focus on gender mainstreaming especially in matching grants by also having women only grant category. As a result, 146 Women owned /led SMEs received grants in different categories which makes it 37% of the total 399 grants given. One grant was also received by a transgender owned /led SME.

1. Capacity Building through SheTrades and Community Engagement

In consultation and support by ITC gender focal, PPAF through its POs implemented a comprehensive set of gender mainstreaming interventions using the SheTrades curriculum, Happy Family Tree model, and the 5M framework. A hybrid SheTrades orientation was conducted for GRASP partner organizations to strengthen understanding gender integration and improve women's access to markets.

Across Sindh and Balochistan, numerous gender sensitization sessions were conducted, engaging participants from FMCs, FCBS groups, SMEs, community elders, and households. These sessions promoted shared domestic responsibilities, joint decision-making, and women's economic participation. Additional SheTrades sessions also focused on both women and men from rural communities, SME household members and those from SMEs, and producer groups. These sessions played a critical role in promoting women's acceptance in business domain and in facilitating women's skills development, business readiness, and active participation in local value chains.

2. Policy Engagement and Institutional Strengthening

To institutionalize gender responsiveness, PPAF through GRASP engaged extensively with provincial departments and legislative bodies in Sindh and Balochistan.

- Consultations were held with planning, women development, and legislative stakeholders to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into provincial development priorities.
- GRASP supported the formation and strengthening of a Gender Policy Working Group in Balochistan to guide gender-responsive policy and institutional reforms.
- Policy advocacy efforts were undertaken to advance women's rights legislation, including support for the implementation of gender-related agricultural and labor policies.

These engagements strengthened the enabling environment for women SMEs and rural women primary producers.

3. Market Linkages, Exposure Opportunities, and Financial Inclusion

To expand women's participation in local and national markets:

- Women-led SMEs were supported to participate in national-level expos, trade fairs, cultural festivals, and financial support ceremonies, enabling them to sell products, gain exposure, and connect with buyers. 2,770 women owned /led SMEs and primary producers were facilitated by PPAF in developing market linkages through participation in fairs, expos and other business enhancement events.
- Engagements with chambers of commerce and business associations strengthened market linkages and improved women's access to trading platforms. PPAF facilitated SMEDA in registering about 409 women owned /led SMEs with FBR, SECP and different business chambers /associations.
- GRASP through financial awareness sessions conducted with financial institutions highlighted barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and advocate for fair access to finance.
- PPAF GRASP through its local POs put in active efforts to identify women owned /led SMEs /primary producers active in GRASP value chains across project areas and develop a comprehensive database of these SMEs for support by GRASP and by other stakeholders. As a result, GRASP MIS database has now about unique 16,782 records of women led /owned SMEs /primary producers working in GRASP focused Livestock and horticultural value chains in 22 target districts in both Sindh and Balochistan. Many of these women SMEs received specialized training in CSA, CSL (FCBS), financial literacy and business plan development, networking and market linkages, export readiness, and digital platforms such as AIMS.

  These interventions collectively enhanced financial inclusion and market competitiveness.

4. Strengthening Value Chain Linkages

Efforts to strengthen value chain linkages placed a strong focus on ensuring that women-led SMEs, women primary producers, and female members of FMCs and FCBS groups were meaningfully included in market systems. Cluster-level meetings with implementing partners created spaces where women entrepreneurs could engage directly with market actors, identify bottlenecks, and explore opportunities to expand their participation in value chains.

Key gender-responsive activities included:

- Joint field visits by ITC, SMEDA, and PPAF technical teams helped women primary producers and women-led SMEs to access technical guidance, market insights, and tailored support where required.
- Review of market challenges through a gender lens, addressing constraints such as mobility, limited market networks, and lack of access to information that disproportionately affect women.
- Women-focused success stories and case studies, showcasing women's leadership, innovation, and contributions within GRASP focused value chains helped promote role models and improve acceptability and support for women led /owned SMEs.

This collaborative, gender-sensitive approach improved coordination among value chain actors and enhanced the visibility, confidence, and market participation of women-led enterprises ensuring that women are not only included but actively benefit from strengthened market linkages.

5. Gender-Responsive Agribusiness and Livestock Development

A series of agribusiness and livestock interventions were delivered to enhance women's technical capabilities:

- Capacity-building sessions equipped women with knowledge on livestock management, disease prevention, vaccination schedules, farm operations, and newborn animal care.
- Collaboration with district livestock departments enabled widespread vaccination campaigns, supporting women livestock farmers and mitigating risks during natural disasters.
- Gender-inclusive training manuals were developed for women-led SMEs in the mango, dates, banana, and livestock value chains, strengthening product quality and value addition.

- Market linkage events across multiple districts introduced women-led SMEs to buyers and strengthened their trading capacity.

6. High-Level Seminars and Advocacy Platforms

A series of high-profile provincial and national seminars were held in Karachi and Quetta, bringing together:

- Government dignitaries
- Financial institutions
- Academic institutions
- Chambers of commerce
- Media representatives
- Rural women entrepreneurs

These seminars highlighted GRASP–PPAF's achievements, showcased women-led SMEs, and facilitated dialogue on financial inclusion, gender-responsive policy reforms, innovation in agriculture, and ecosystem strengthening.

Panel discussions covered:

- Sustainable agriculture and innovation
- Women's entrepreneurship and access to finance
- Policy reforms and business climate improvements

Participants provided recommendations on taxation, financing barriers, and business sustainability, especially for rural women and emerging entrepreneurs.

7. Community Campaigns and Climate Awareness

PPAF facilitated and led important community-based initiatives and events to promote women role in society and business eco system. This included plantation campaign titled "Aik Beti Aik Shajar" implemented with the involvement of schoolgirls, teachers, and district teams to promote environmental sustainability and climate awareness in GRASP focal areas. Important days celebration such as SME day and Independence Day to create a sense of community inclusion and awareness for women engagement in economic activities, across GRASP districts.

PPAF's GRASP gender mainstreaming efforts significantly strengthened women's leadership and economic participation across agriculture and livestock sectors by enhancing their access to markets, finance, and digital platforms. Through targeted training, inclusive community engagement, and value chain integration, women entrepreneurs were better equipped to expand their businesses and participate in formal market systems. Multi-stakeholder policy engagement improved alignment with gender-responsive development priorities, while continuous capacity building at institutional and community levels fostered stronger implementation of gender-sensitive practices. These initiatives also created safe and inclusive economic spaces for women and marginalized groups including transgender entrepreneurs ensuring they could actively contribute to local economies. Collectively, these outcomes advanced a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive rural economy conducive to active women participation throughout Sindh and Balochistan, demonstrating tangible progress toward long-term gender equality and economic empowerment.

5.2 Environmental and Climate-Smart Practices

Environmental sustainability and climate resilience were embedded as core design principles across the GRASP project rather than implemented as stand-alone or isolated interventions. Under the PPAF component, environmental outcomes were primarily achieved through enterprise-level decision-making, access to finance instruments, and value chain–specific upgrading, supported by structured rural/business mobilization and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.

A cross-analysis of outcome indicators, output-level achievements, value chain progress, and the Access to Finance component confirms strong internal consistency in reported environmental results across the project. These results demonstrate that climate-smart and environmentally responsible practices were adopted at scale and were directly linked to improved enterprise performance, resilience, and sustainability.

The tracking of 22,000 project beneficiaries at outcome level shows, **17,745 SMEs (including 5,987 women-owned/led enterprises)** adopted cleaner production methods and climate-smart agriculture and livestock practices, exceeding the revised project target of 13,500 SMEs. Adoption was particularly strong across horticulture and livestock value chains, where climate exposure and resource constraints are most pronounced. These figures are derived from two rounds of outcome-level surveys conducted through the PPAF-managed MIS using digital data collection tools and are fully aligned with the Outcome 1 indicators reported to the European Union.

The adoption of climate-smart practices included investments in water-efficient irrigation systems (drip and sprinkler), renewable energy solutions (particularly solar-powered processing, pumping, and cold storage), improved livestock housing and bio-secure sheds, energy-efficient machinery, improved post-harvest handling, grading and storage infrastructure, and waste-reducing value addition practices. These interventions contributed to reduced resource intensity, improved productivity, and enhanced resilience to climate variability and shocks.

From a financing perspective, environmental outcomes were driven primarily through **matching grants and credit facilitation**, rather than through dedicated environmental sub-projects. Of the **399 SMEs supported through matching grants**, approximately **80 percent (319 SMEs)** invested in green or climate-smart technologies as part of their approved business plans. This proportion is consistent across both provinces and directly aligns with data reported under the Access to Finance section, where environmental sustainability was embedded as a core appraisal and selection criterion for grant approval.

Provincial analysis confirms balanced geographic integration of environmental investments. In **Balochistan, 77%** of matching-grant-supported SMEs invested in green technologies, while in **Sindh the figure reached 83%**. This indicates that climate-smart adoption was not geographically skewed, but rather systematically mainstreamed across project locations. Value chain-wise analysis further shows higher adoption rates in livestock (cattle, goat, poultry) and perennial horticulture value chains (dates, mango, grapes), where climate risks are high and returns on resilient infrastructure are more immediate.

Loan facilitation under the Access to Finance component further reinforced environmental outcomes. SMEs accessing formal credit invested in climate-resilient infrastructure such as improved livestock sheds, solar-powered processing units, cold storage, energy-efficient equipment, and water-saving technologies. These investments directly supported increased productivity, reduced operating costs, and improved environmental performance, while also contributing to higher sales turnover, increased investment levels, and job creation.

Environmental sustainability outcomes are also reflected in enterprise behavior change. Outcome survey findings show that SMEs adopting climate-smart practices reported stronger business performance, including higher investment growth and sales increases, particularly in livestock value chains. Women-led enterprises, in particular, demonstrated higher relative gains in investment and adoption of green technologies, underscoring the effectiveness of integrating gender-responsive financing with climate-smart programming.

PPAF’s Monitoring and Evaluation system played a critical role in ensuring the credibility and consistency of environmental reporting. Climate-smart and environmental indicators were systematically embedded within outcome surveys and matching grant monitoring tools. This ensured that reported adoption figures were evidence-based, verifiable, and aligned with logframe indicators.

Overall, environmental sustainability under GRASP was achieved through the **mainstreaming of climate-smart investments within enterprise finance, value chain upgrading, and SME growth strategies**, rather than through parallel environmental activities. This integrated approach ensured coherence across outcome and output reporting, strengthened the economic rationale for green adoption, and enhanced the long-term resilience and sustainability of rural SMEs in Sindh and Balochistan.

6 Communication and Visibility

GRASP's communication and visibility efforts significantly enhanced the project's national profile, strengthened stakeholder engagement, and showcased tangible impact on SMEs across Sindh and Balochistan. Through a strategic mix of digital outreach, media engagement, storytelling, and communication, the project effectively built public awareness around SME challenges and the solutions introduced under GRASP. High-level endorsements and consistent media coverage boosted project credibility, while targeted messaging in local languages strengthened trust within rural communities and encouraged broader participation in trainings and activities.

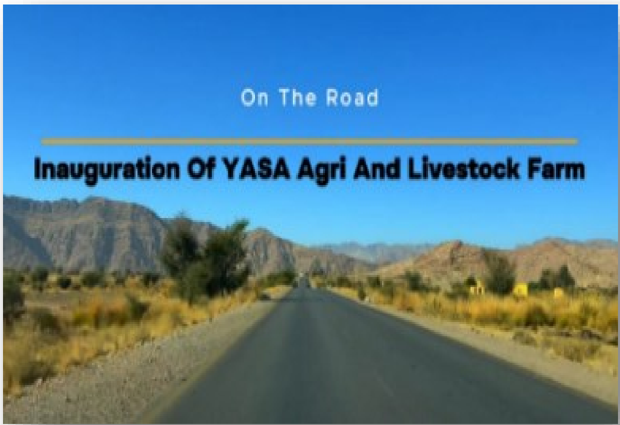
Success stories, videos, and field-based communication content demonstrated clear behavioral changes among beneficiaries, including improved business practices, increased market linkages, and greater inclusion of women and youth in enterprise development. Coordinated visibility campaigns and refresher trainings for partner organizations enhanced branding consistency and reinforced collaboration across implementing partners. These efforts amplified the voice of rural SMEs, increased awareness of GRASP's interventions, and positioned the project as a credible and scalable model for SME competitiveness and inclusive agribusiness development.

6.1 Strategic Communication and Visibility

Communication efforts remained fully aligned with EU and ITC visibility guidelines. With the onboarding of seven new partner organizations and 22 financial institutions, the GRASP Visibility Guideline Manual was disseminated, and refresher orientations were held to ensure compliance with branding requirements. Continuous coordination with partners, provincial departments, and SMEs ensured accurate documentation and representation of GRASP interventions across digital and traditional media platforms.

Across its implementation period, GRASP generated meaningful visibility and demonstrated impact by:

- Prioritizing legacy building through documenting sustainable models and long-term change.
- Maintaining a strong focus on grassroots inclusion, policy advocacy, and high-impact multimedia storytelling.
- Leveraging partnerships with media, government, and development actors to enhance outreach and visibility.



6.2 Social Media: Content Developed and Disseminated

Throughout the reporting period, social media remained a central pillar of GRASP's communication and visibility efforts. It served as a strategic platform to highlight interventions, share progress and achievements, and document the project's impact across Sindh and Balochistan. Active since 2021, the project shared a total of **213 social media posts**, comprising a diverse mix of static content, video testimonials, stakeholder interviews, podcasts, vlogs, and thematic campaigns.

A variety of communication approaches were used to ensure content was engaging, inclusive, and reflective of GRASP's interventions. These included commemorating key international days and running thematic campaigns. Innovative formats such as the *Roots of Progress* podcast series and the *On the Road* vlogs deepened engagement by providing thematic insights and authentic field perspectives. A high-level webinar o Webinar on *SME Development and Financial Inclusion*, featuring Mr. Yasir Ashfaq (CEO, Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company) and Dr. Rashid Bajwa (CEO, National Rural Support Programme) on SME Development and Financial Inclusion further extended GRASP's digital outreach by drawing strong participation and continued engagement through its recorded version.

Table 14: Summary of Social Media Content Produced

Content Type Conceptualized, Developed and Disseminated on Social Media	
Static Posts/ infographics	**124**
Success Stories (Video Format)	**19**
Project Team/ Stakeholder Testimonial	**19**
Thematic Videos	**31**
Podcast	**4**
Vlog	**2**
Documentary	**4**
Cross-project Promotion Video	**1**
Event Livestreaming	**5**
Webinar	**1**
Photo-story	**3**

6.3 Traditional Media Engagement

GRASP secured extensive traditional media coverage across both print and electronic platforms. The project achieved **433** placements, with more than ***316 in print and 117 in electronic media***. Coverage appeared in top-tier national and regional outlets such as *Business Recorder*, *The News*, *Dunya*, *Khabrain*, *Express*, *Balochistan Times*, and *Sindh News*, and on major TV networks including *Samaa News*, *ARY News*, *Hum News*, and *PTV*. This consistent presence reinforced GRASP's positioning across diverse media landscapes. Using print outlets like *CPEC News, Afghanistan News, Dubai*

News, etc. alongside magazines like *Economic Affairs*[9] which proved instrumental in taking the message beyond geographical boundaries.

6.4 Audience Outreach and Engagement

Across the project lifecycle, GRASP achieved extensive outreach through a strategic blend of digital and traditional media channels reaching **more than 60 million unique users** across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. This multi-tiered audience engagement helped embed GRASP's messaging within public discourse and broadened recognition of rural enterprise development.

6.4.1 Digital Reach

GRASP's digital footprint expanded steadily throughout the project, with social media emerging as a vital channel for visibility, community outreach, and storytelling. Between March 2023 and October 2025, GRASP content cumulatively reached ***over 2.2 million users*** across platforms and ***more than 2,600 watch hours*** over YouTube alone. While 2023 recorded a one-time spike due to a boosted post, subsequent performance reflects **stronger, organic traction** sparking interaction whether through likes, comments, shares, or views showing that the messaging was relevant and well-received.

***Boosted post contributed to peak reach**

6.4.2 Traditional Media Coverage

Traditional media, both print and electronic, were strategically leveraged to maximize project visibility. A combination of satellite and terrestrial channels ensured wider demographic and geographic coverage. **More than 117** television features were broadcast on leading national and regional outlets like *PTV News, PTV World, Express News, Hum News, Samaa, Aab Tak, etc.* reaching an estimated audience of **50 – 60 million**. This high level of audience penetration was achieved by strategically utilizing channels that cover the entire media spectrum. For example, PTV that covers both urban and rural areas and leading private networks like ARY News and Express News that have high viewership in major metropolitans.

The estimated figure is determined using a conservative audience estimation approach, relying on confirmed and limited audience data available from recognized sources like Gallup and MediaLogic. This estimate relies on the established daily cumulative unique reach of top-tier channels utilized in our media mix and mass viewership gained through PTV's nationwide network and live coverage. The figure does not include viewership of channels that lack confirmed, listed audience data, nor

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https://www.ppaf.org.pk/doc/NewsRoom/articles/GRASP%20Article-%20Monthly%20Economic%20Affairs%20July%20August%202025.pdf does it factor in potential viewers gained from separate media released from government officials' offices.

Radio broadcasting further expanded access, especially at the grassroots level, reaching audiences in rural and peri-urban districts.

More than 316 newspapers insertions, local and international including The News, The Nation, Business Recorder, Balochistan Times, Daily Express, Daily Times, Nawa-e-Waqt, Express, Mashrik Kawish, Khabrain, CPEC News, Afghanistan News, and Dubai News were noted. The print media frame was diverse in terms of language, region and tier which gives relatively more diverse audience. Following a highly conservative approach with limited data available it is estimated that the content reached around **10 – 12 million**. The calculation is based on confirmed listed circulation of major (not all) outlets used and assumes a strict 1:1 readership ratio (one reader per copy) against the industry standards of multiplier of 5 and 8.

6.5 GRASP Events' Coverage

To ensure strong visibility and strategic profiling, events were planned and executed with a focus on stakeholder participation, SME showcasing, and extensive traditional and digital media coverage. The categories below summarize some of the key events.

Matching Grant Cheques Distribution Ceremonies: Across four cycles, matching grant cheque distribution ceremonies were organized in Sindh and Balochistan, bringing together government representatives, project partners, SMEs, and key stakeholders. Events were graced by high-level dignitaries, including the Chief Minister Balochistan, Governor Sindh, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan and senior leadership from ITC Geneva. Communication support included tailored visibility materials, guided press engagement, real-time social media coverage, livestreaming and coordinated traditional media outreach to amplify project visibility.

SME Inaugurations: The inauguration of GRASP-supported SMEs' facilities including the region's first onion dehydration unit in Khuzdar (YASA Agri Livestock and Farm), corrugated carton factory (Al-Khair) in Quetta, vacuum chamber dehydration unit in Karachi (Perfect Food Industries), a banana tissue culture lab (S. Nizamani Enterprise) and banana cold storage facility (Rashidi Agriculture Fruit Farm) in Tando Allahyar. These inauguration ceremonies were attended by ITC Geneva representatives, EU officials, government representatives, PPAF and implementing partners. Coverage across social, digital, print and electronic media highlighted GRASP's contribution to value addition, technology adoption, and rural job creation.

Insurance Policy Issuance Ceremony: This event marked a major milestone to improve the financial health of the farming community. During the event 25 insurance policies covering 328 acres, valued at PKR 27 million were handed over in the presence of Chairman PMYP, PPAF and Salaam Takaful's leadership. The event received strong visibility in national media outlets and elevated project's role in developing linkages with FIs.

Policy Seminars & Thematic Dialogues: 4 high-level seminars were convened in Quetta and Karachi focused on women's economic empowerment and building inclusive enterprise ecosystems. These events brought together senior provincial officials, development partners, academia, private sector actors, and civil society. Communication support ensured events were well-curated with strong aesthetics and extensive media outreach. The seminars secured more than 60 media placements and positioned GRASP as a thought leader in women-focused enterprise development.

International Delegation Visits: Two major international missions, involving the European Union Delegation to Pakistan and a delegation of the European Parliament, reinforced global recognition of the project's approach. The missions, which included showcasing on-ground results at GRASP-supported SMEs, were extensively reported by 51 traditional media and 5 digital media outlets. **International Day of MSMEs:** International Day of MSMEs was celebrated annually across all target districts bringing together SMEs and key stakeholders including local government officials like City Mayor, Assistant Commissioner, senior officials from Social Welfare department, etc., financial institutions, chamber, academia, and media.

District Level Events and Hackathons: Across the project period, numerous district-level events including hackathons, local pitching sessions, sector-specific gatherings, etc. were executed to improve community awareness, celebrate local enterprise success, and strengthen market linkages. These activities expanded grassroot level visibility and provided important platforms for rural SMEs to showcase their products, connect with buyers, and interact with local administration and financial institutions.

Climate Response & Post-Flood Support (Wheat Seed Distribution): Following the 2022 floods, GRASP supported 13,500 affected SMEs by distributing 675,000 KGs of wheat seeds. This intervention demonstrated the project's commitment to resilience and recovery. The activity gained strong visibility on social and traditional media, highlighting PPAF and GRASP's role in safeguarding livelihoods.

6.6 Knowledge Products & Multimedia Campaigns

Throughout the project, a range of knowledge products and multimedia campaigns were developed to communicate GRASP's achievements, document its learnings, and engage diverse audiences. This included documentaries, testimonials, radio and print campaigns and IEC material.

Documentaries: A full-length documentary, *Rise of Rural Enterprises*, and two shorter province-centric versions were finalized and produced. The documentaries combined SME stories, leadership perspectives, and dynamic field visuals to create an authentic and compelling narrative of GRASP's impact in Sindh and Balochistan

Radio Campaign: An eight-episode radio series, *Roshan Raahien*, was broadcast across 22 districts of Sindh and Balochistan using FM and MW networks. Featuring expert interviews, SME success stories, and thematic discussions, the series provided an accessible platform for communities less engaged on digital channels.

Print Media Campaign: Six high-impact op-eds were published in prominent national media outlets, including *The News Sunday* and *Business Recorder* covering themes such as importance and strengthening SMEs, access to finance, and project's contribution towards SDGs. Published under credible bylines these pieces lent more authenticity to the content.

IEC Material: A GRASP info-pack, comprising of flyers, brochure, gender analysis paper, was designed and regularly updated. These materials were used across stakeholder engagements to communicate key results, approaches, and project impact.

6.7 Civil Society Engagement

In a unique way, Independence Day and Defense Day was used as an opportunity to bring civil society together. National day events were celebrated by POs mobilizing SMEs to foster community engagement. The celebrations were held at grassroot level across Sindh and Balochistan and served as a platform to bring together different stakeholders where they interacted with SMEs and explored how to create an enabling environment that can lead to national growth.

GRASP's digital footprint expanded significantly during the reporting period, supported by a diverse set of dissemination platforms including monthly newsletters, the GRASP Facebook group, LinkedIn, YouTube video shorts, web stories, newspaper articles, press releases, and participation in the UN Communication Working Group. These channels greatly amplified project achievements, with the GRASP Facebook group growing to 900 members and LinkedIn content reaching over 28,000 viewers. Major national outlets including Dawn, The News, and The Express Tribune—frequently covered GRASP milestones, strengthening national visibility.

6.8 Newsletter Contributions

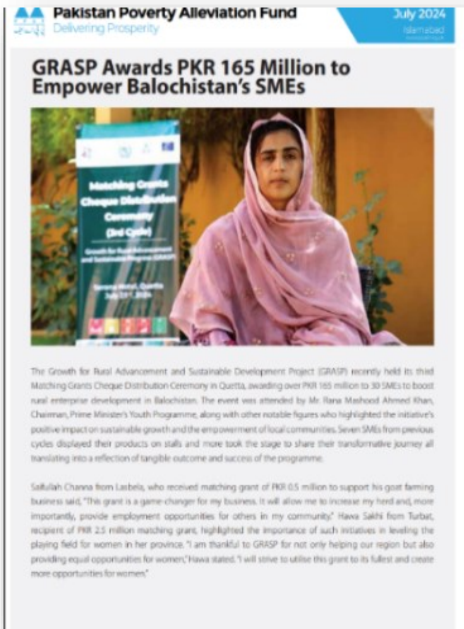
GRASP content was regularly featured in PPAF and ITC newsletters, enhancing project's visibility among national and international stakeholders.

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
Delivering Prosperity

Newsletter
April 2025
Islamabad

GRASP Pitching Growth Opportunities for Rural SMEs

Momentum surged across Sindh and Balochistan as 63 shortlisted enterprises took the stage in the pitching sessions of GRASP's fourth Matching Grants cycle. Funded by the European Union, the Growth for Rural



Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
Delivering Prosperity
July 2024

GRASP Awards PKR 165 Million to Empower Balochistan's SMEs

The Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Development Project (GRASP) recently held its third Matching Grants Cheque Distribution Ceremony in Quetta, awarding over PKR 165 million to 30 SMEs to boost rural enterprise development in Balochistan. The event was attended by Mr. Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan, Chairman, Prime Minister's Youth Programme, along with other notable figures who highlighted the initiative's positive impact on sustainable growth and the empowerment of local communities. Seven SMEs from previous cycles displayed their products on stalls and more took the stage to share their transformative journey all translating into a reflection of tangible outcome and success of the programme.

Saifullah Channa from Lasbela, who received matching grant of PKR 0.5 million to support his goat farming business said, "This grant is a game-changer for my business. It will allow me to increase my herd and, more importantly, provide employment opportunities for others in my community." Hawa Sakhi from Turbat, recipient of PKR 2.5 million matching grant, highlighted the importance of such initiatives in leveling the playing field for women in her province. "I am thankful to GRASP for not only helping our region but also providing equal opportunities for women," Hawa stated. "I will strive to utilise this grant to its fullest and create more opportunities for women."

6.9 Impact of Media Coverage

Policy Influence & Government Uptake

Sustained visibility helped establish GRASP as a scalable and replicable model for rural enterprise development. Chief Minister of Balochistan Mr. Sarfaraz Bugti, during the 4th Cycle Matching Grant Cheque Distribution Ceremony, publicly acknowledged GRASP as the inspiration for designing a PKR 16 billion programme focused on youth enterprise development and economic integration in the province[10]. Similar endorsements were echoed by other provincial departments, who recognized GRASP's approach as a viable blueprint for strengthening SMEs and value chains.

"The work done in coordination with department has yielded positive impact." – Asif Nawaz Khosa, AD Industries and Commerce Department, Balochistan

"By supporting SMEs and agriculture we can create sustainability and ownership level" – Naila Sarfaraz, Assistant Chief Foreign Aid, P&D Department Sindh.

National & International Recognition of SMEs

Continuous storytelling through documentaries, video testimonials, static posts, media and event platforms amplified the profile of project supported SMEs, allowing them to gain visibility far beyond official social media handles and their districts. A few examples include

- Shaher Bano (Sindh): A PKR 2.5 million matching grant recipient's entrepreneurial journey was covered by a DW-ARY collaboration in 2025, bringing global attention to women-led agribusiness innovation[11]. She also received PPAF's Amatul Raqeeb award
- Zainab Bibi (Balochistan): Following GRASP's facilitation in developing linkages with Bank Alfalah which led to her business's transformation; Zainab Bibi was awarded 'Women of Resilience' award by State Bank of Pakistan in 2024.
- S. Nizamani Enterprise (Sindh) and Islamabad Agri Enterprise (Balochistan): Both SMEs were awarded by SDPI for innovation in the banana and grape sectors under categories emphasizing AgriTech, food security, production innovation, and decarbonization.

Enhanced Market Linkages & Business Growth

[10] https://www.facebook.com/reel/2317950288655287/
https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17ptua9RZD/?mibextid=wwXIfr

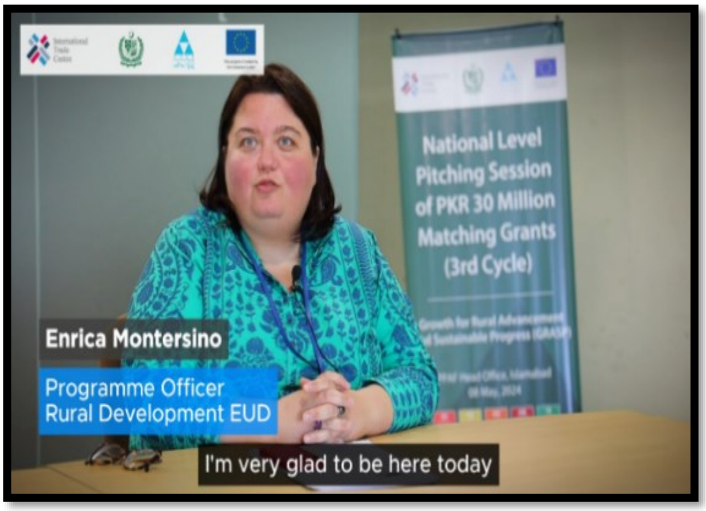
Events where SMEs participated either by setting-up stalls or by sharing their journey on stage, they were able to connect with wider audience. These visibility platforms and opportunities directly contributed to increased exposure, new linkages, expanded market access and business growth for SMEs. SMEs were able to showcase and reach broader national and international markets. Two such recent examples are Lok Mela (2024) where 2 GARSP supported SMEs participated and Jeddah Food Expo where 4 SMEs from date value chain participated.

Global Level Visibility

Video footage highlighting flood-affected SMEs supported by GRASP was showcased at COP27 in the ITC stall, reaching global stakeholders.

Overall, GRASP implemented a comprehensive and multi-layered communication strategy that strengthened national recognition of the project and highlighted its contribution to SME development, resilience, and inclusive economic growth. Communication efforts:

- Expanded audience reach across digital, broadcast, and print media
- Demonstrated tangible impact across horticulture and livestock value chains
- Strengthened collaboration with partners, provinces, and national stakeholders
- Documented high-quality stories and evidence of change
- Contributed to national dialogue on SME development and economic inclusion



- Gave exposure and opened avenues of expansion for SMEs

Collectively, these efforts elevated GRASP's profile and firmly positioned it as a catalytic initiative driving SME competitiveness in Pakistan.

7 Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation

The Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) project's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) interventions in Sindh and Balochistan served as a critical backbone for ensuring evidence-driven decision-making, accountability, and validation of project outcomes. From 2021 to 2025, M&E efforts moved beyond output tracking toward understanding how interventions translated into real improvements for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across horticulture and livestock value chains. The M&E narrative reflects a consistent, systematic, and outcomes-focused approach that connected field insights to management decisions, strengthened partner performance, and contributed significantly to final impact assessment. As the project reached its completion phase, the M&E component's role shifted from operational supervision to strategic consolidation ensuring that outcomes, systems and performance changes, and sector-level improvements were captured and reported accurately to EU and other stakeholders.

PPAF led GRASP M&E from 2021-2024, designing and operationalizing key monitoring infrastructure and undertakings such as GRASP M&E Strategy, GRASP MIS, M&E Technical Working Group (TWG), project Baseline, progress tracking and data collection tools including SME data form (the base for SME Database in project MIS), special /need based tracer and impact assessments, Reporting formats, all progress and results data validation and verification, tracking, reporting and verification of legacy data (pre PPAF onboarding), support and facilitation in important third party studies and undertakings such as ROM, project Mid-term review, project endline, third party monitoring of GRASP and GRASP logframe revision commissioned by EU, beneficiary feedback surveys (10,000 SMEs at Output level) and Outcome tracking (reaching 25,000+ beneficiary SMEs).

In the overall project context, design of GRASP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy was crucial to coordinate and synergize efforts of a broad team of four core project partners (ITC, FAO, PPAF & SMEDA) and the additional seven (BRSP, TF, SPO, RDF, TRDP, GSF & SAFWCO) implementing partner organizations to ensure feedback loops were timely and relevant in the given context for achieving the desired outputs and quality in implementation while linking past, present and future work seamlessly for projection of overall results and project impact. The strategy led by PPAF GRASP M&E team and overseen by the Technical Working Group, comprising key programme personnel and M&E staff from core and implementing partners was thus designed to strengthen accountability, learning, and adaptive management. The GRASP M&E strategy was anchored in six core pillars:

1. **Regular tracking of project progress;** systematically demonstrate credible results.
2. **Robust quality assurance and process verification mechanisms** to ensure reliability and consistency.
3. **Collection of credible and verifiable evidence** on program results /impact and lessons for future implementation.
4. **Continuous testing and learning** from ongoing M&E processes to inform adaptive adjustments.
5. **Capacity-building initiatives** for programme partners and key stakeholders to enhance M&E competencies and help quality implementation.
6. **Routine analysis of the project context** to anticipate risks and align interventions accordingly.

Key Pillars of GRASP M&E Strategy

Tracking
- MIS
- Realtime Monitoring
- Periodic reports
- Output based disbursements

Quality
- Spot checks
- Process reviews
- Appreciative inquiries
- ToC based intervention model
- Steering committee & other forums

Impact
- Evidence collection
- Mid term evaluation
- Final evaluation
- SDG based analysis

Testing
- Special studies
- Feasibilities
- Annual hackathons leading to adaptive planning
- Partner feedbacks

Capacity
- Staff orientation
- M&E as an integrated role
- Partner integration in the strategy
- Trainings on MIS and tools.

Context
- Contextual analysis
- Risk matrix analysis and reporting
- Close coordination with the local and provincial govts.

M&E Strategy was developed with the Goal "*To establish a functional Monitoring and Evaluation system for tracking progress and demonstrating results of the Program and to ensure evidence-based decision making*".

Within the framework of M&E Strategy, monitoring and evaluation had three main purposes:

1. To strengthen accountability for GRASP's work.
2. To stimulate learning and improve performance across the project, core partners, partner organizations and other associates.
3. To facilitate informed decision- making based on robust and credible data.

The specific objectives of the M&E Strategy were to:

1. Improve the quality and capacity of the routine data collection systems, e.g., development of MIS, data collection & Monitoring tools, capacity building, type and frequency of reports.
2. Setting up / clarifying roles, responsibilities, and resources for M&E across all core partners of GRASP (ITC, PPAF, SMEDA and FAO) and POs.
3. Design and implement results-based reporting through the Management Information System (MIS) of the programme.
4. Ensure quality, standardization and greater utilization of routine data sources for decision making.
5. Contribute to project's visibility and communication by providing verifiable data on project's progress and results.
6. Mainstreaming Gender and Learning
7. Beneficiary Complaint and Feedback Mechanism

The core driving features of GRASP M&E strategy were:

1. Well defined outcomes/results, outputs, and indicators.
2. Report(s) generation mechanism and unified reporting tool; project MIS.
3. Standard tools, sources, methods, frequency, and data collection for respective indicators.
4. Clear roles and responsibilities of all core partners and POs in project M&E, data collection and submission.
5. Results reporting and presentation based on analysis, review and validation of collected information and data.

PPAF led GRASP M&E from April 2021 till February 2024 and after that actively supported and facilitated ITC in maintaining M&E momentum and quality. PPAF's key monitoring deliverables per PPAF GRASP grant agreement were.

- Institutionalization of M&E Framework and Strategy
- Developing data collection tools
- Developing reporting formats
- Evaluations, Assessments, Surveys conducted (as per WP)
- Develop beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanism
- Conducting monthly TWG meetings - PMU
- Quarterly and Annual Progress Reports developed
- Capacity building of PMU/GRASP Staff on MIS
- Capacity building of POs on MIS

PPAF GRASP M&E team ensured all developed monitoring systems and processes are tested and operationalized for tracking project progress by ensuring all partners had the capacities to understand, use and benefit from it for quality implementation and credible reporting of GRASP work.

Over the implementation period (2021-2025) PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS team worked rigorously with partners, provincial teams and POs to ensure elements and essence of M&E strategy are followed in letter and spirit for effective delivery in line with the M&E and results framework of the project. This following updates synthesize all major streams of M&E work undertaken throughout the GRASP lifecycle.

7.1 Field Monitoring and Ground-Truthing

Built into the annual GRASP workplan, The PPAF GRASP M&E team made both planned and need based field visits across project districts and partner activities in Sindh and Balochistan to track and verify implementation progress, assess field implementation /activities, and validate partner reporting. This monitoring mechanism was maintained at three levels i.e. PPAF GRASP PMU based M&E team, Provincial M&E Managers and M&E resources with partner organizations. In parallel the PPAF GRASP M&E team maintained close liaison with core partners' M&E resources by also utilizing the TWG platform. The field monitoring provided critical ground-truth data on beneficiary experiences, challenges, and emerging opportunities, helping critical course correction, quality of implementation, progress and performance checks and strengthen the accuracy of reported data and results.

PPAF's sub-contracted partner organizations (POs) reported their progress and activities at the community level, collected data related to organizations/SMEs they interacted with and entered it into GRASP MIS. PPAF GRASP M&E Managers and POCMO tracked and monitored POs' progress on routine basis in field.

Joint monitoring /implementation support Mission (ISM) by ITC, PPAF and FAO also took place on periodic basis in both provinces. Facilitated by PPAF GRASP and POs, these missions include Senior Program /Operations and monitoring staff including PMU team (Chief Technical Advisor and Monitoring Lead), Ops lead GRASP PPAF, PPAF MER, M&E Specialist GRASP, respective provincial monitoring and program focal persons from ITC, FAO and PPAF, and local POs. The main objectives of implementation support mission were to ensure POs are onboard with Core partners (ITC, PPAF and FAO teams) in terms of basic programmatic understanding, approach and planning, implementation status of various activities and synchronization of POs work with partners for maximum efficiency and delivery according to agreed timelines. To have detailed implementation / workplan related discussion with partner organizations, individual PO level progress review, visiting SMEs, beneficiaries and other stakeholders at field level, joint monitoring of actions / implementation on ground and feedback for process improvement and covering observed gaps.

7.2 Technical Working Group (TWG) Coordination

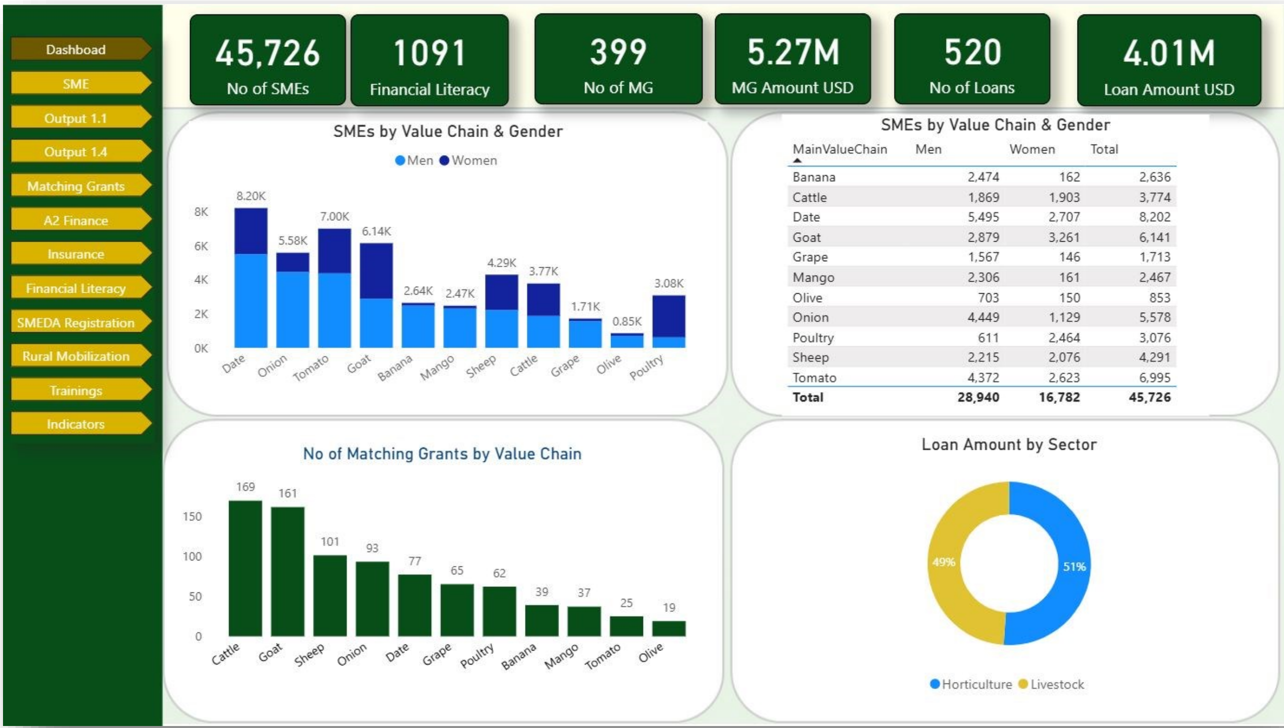
The Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising ITC, PPAF, FAO and other implementing partner(s) representatives was made operational by PPAF GRASP M&E in very first implementation year of PPAF GRASP i.e. 2021-22 in close consultation with ITC PMU M&E Focal, Project Coordinator and endorsement of broader ITC team. TWG had the responsibility of steering the M&E strategy and served as a platform for coordinating and ensuring all partners' teams, activities, processes and in-house systems are in synch with GRASP M&E systems and approach. Issues and challenges were discussed in TWG meetings and recommendations made to project management for endorsement and enforcement across project. The meetings of the TWG were documented and circulated amongst partners for follow-up on key decisions and takeaways.

The joint TWG meetings in Islamabad and provinces supported strategic positioning of M&E work and operational level clarity down to individual indicator definitions, critical results MOVs, reporting formats and frequencies, MIS design, access and approvals, GRASP complaints mechanism, capacity building and technical backstopping of field team and alignment of partners implementation and reporting to programme's intervention logic. This collaborative structure improved accountability and ensured timely follow-up on identified gaps.

7.3 GRASP MIS and Data Systems

GRASP MIS is the central repository of all project data (progress and results) providing a verifiable basis for all project progress and results reporting. It has been structured in line with the project logic model and managed by PPAF GRASP MIS team. Authorized PMU, and field-level staff (Provincial and / or District teams) of core partners and POs entered (at least on monthly basis) data along with minimum specified MoVs (e.g. activity reports, attendance sheets, photographs, MoUs) with levels defined within organization and PPAF GRASP M&E team to validate, verify and approve it for project PMU review and approvals.

GRASP MIS was designed and evolved continuously in line with project stages by PPAF GRASP MIS with close support from M&E team and in coordination with ITC Project Management and program teams to serve as a central, coordinated, unified and relevant tool for data & information collection, management, and presentation. GRASP MIS linked and brought together data from different partners /teams and sources for ease of analysis, reporting and use for informed decision

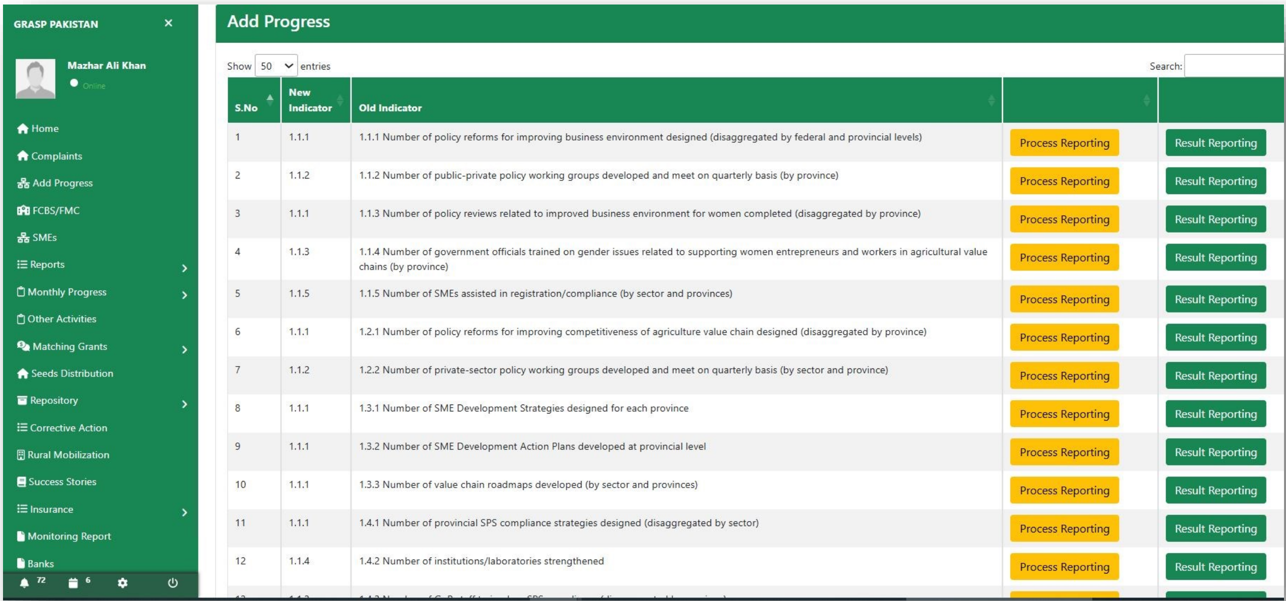


making. The MIS design help summarize performance across all project outputs associated performance indicators: thus, having a clear visualization of implementation progress and against the results indicators. Custom dashboards and interfaces were developed to present different strings and themes of data e.g. SME database, Matching Grants, Loans, Trainings, Results /Outcome level progress, Reports and so on. Within MIS, data formats have been made available for core partners i.e. ITC, FAO, SMEDA & PPAF as well as partner organizations (POs). The data is disaggregated by gender, sector, value chains, districts, and provinces. To ensure correct data entry and reporting, GRASP MIS team conducted regular capacity building training for the users of the project MIS. Need-based one-to-one support was facilitated as and when required by any of the team members.

Over time the M&E team helped enhance the Management Information System (MIS) by supporting MIS team in refining data entry processes, improving validation checks, and ensuring complete and accurate reporting across partner organizations. Data cleaning and consolidation were undertaken on periodic basis. The MIS and M&E team worked continuously with all partners, importantly with ITC PMU and Geneva based teams to strengthen the GRASP information management ecosystem by ensuring data accuracy, improving system functionality, and supporting partners through continuous technical assistance. Major achievements included resolving discrepancies in SME registration, beneficiary tagging, MoV validation and verification, Grants disbursements, loan disbursements as well as introducing user-friendly reporting features to streamline analysis.

Consistent follow-ups enabled timely data uploads and verification for presentation of progress across Rural Mobilization, Access to Finance, Matching Grants, Financial Literacy, Trainings, SME registration, comms and visibility, Policy work, Results Surveys and reports, M&E work and other program and support activities. To reinforce credibility of data and information, the MIS team helped design suitable interface for consolidation and uploading of associated MoVs, while M&E team validated and verified this information at field level.

From 2022 onward, once the foundational data collection and reporting systems had been established by the PPAF M&E and MIS teams, the M&E team with support from MIS initiated extensive data cleaning and verification exercises. This process included adding new SME records, removing duplicate entries, and consolidating datasets from multiple components and partners, including consultants and service providers engaged by different stakeholders. The objective was to organize GRASP progress and results data into a reliable, coherent system for reporting and communication. This effort also covered legacy data that reflected GRASP activities prior to PPAF's onboarding. Significant progress was made in strengthening data quality and MIS alignment across Sindh and Balochistan, addressing long-standing inconsistencies that had affected results reporting and beneficiary traceability. Legacy issues including duplicate SME IDs, untagged beneficiaries, fragmented Means of Verification (MoVs), and inconsistent and missing entries across different program components by all partners were systematically resolved through province-wide reconciliation exercises jointly led by the PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS teams. This process involved cleaning and standardizing historical data, consolidating SME records through SME-centric tagging, and conducting detailed data audits to eliminate duplicates and correct inaccuracies. As a result, project data is now maintained as a unified, reliable dataset that is fully traceable and available for end-of-project analysis and donor reporting.



By 2024, different MIS dashboards were fully operational including special need-based interfaces required by different partners to manage respective numbers and reporting. These dashboards provide partner-specific analytics on SME gender participation, SME performance, disbursement timelines, and geographic distribution. Automated progress dashboards enabled management teams to track real-time status of grant milestones, verification stages, and training coverage. The introduction of color-coded progress bars and visual summaries improved coordination between field teams and

M&E units, reducing reporting delays and improving efficiency. To address recurring gaps and inconsistencies, TWG meetings helped synch thought process and responsibilities at project level followed by capacity-building sessions to clarify reporting requirements, strengthen understanding of MIS functionalities, and support legacy data clean-up through hands-on exercises. Throughout this period, the PPAF GRASP MIS and M&E team played a pivotal role in ensuring smooth coordination, evidence-based decision-making, and compliance with reporting standards ultimately contributing to a more reliable, efficient, and responsive GRASP MIS system.

Following project completion, the GRASP MIS has been retained within PPAF institutional systems to preserve project data, documentation, and implementation history. The system is hosted within PPAF IT environment and managed in accordance with established data management and security protocols. Role-based access controls remain in place to safeguard confidentiality and ensure appropriate use of information.

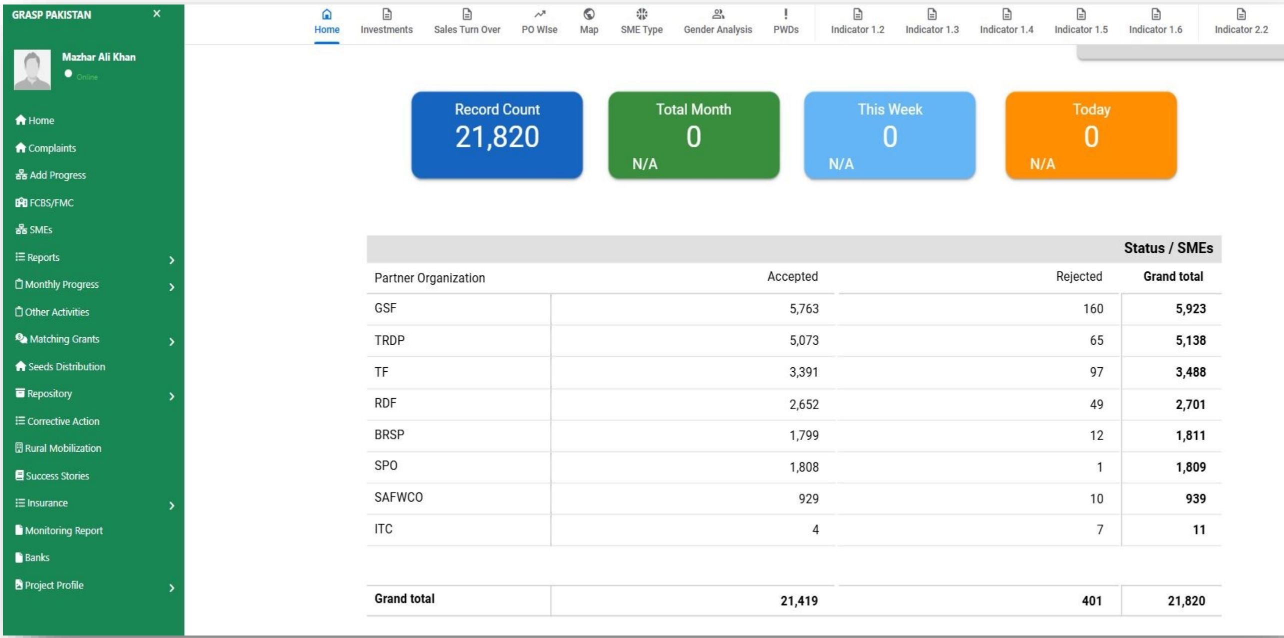
Post closure, the MIS has transitioned from an active data-entry platform to a reporting, archival, and reference system. No further data entry from Partner Organizations is required and editing functions have been disabled to safeguard data integrity. The Repository System remains accessible as a knowledge resource, including SMEs information, business plans, progress reports, social media posts, and success stories / video documentaries. An aggregated public facing dashboard is available through the PPAF website for guest users, promoting transparency while protecting sensitive information. Relevant data may be shared with stakeholders such as ITC upon request, for review, evaluation, and learning purposes.

Overall, the GRASP MIS continues to serve as a secure digital archive and reference platform, preserving institutional memory and supporting evidence-based learning beyond the project lifecycle.

7.4 Results Verification and Data Quality Assurance

The PPAF–GRASP M&E team developed a consolidated overview of implementation progress against the output-level targets (old logframe) by capturing feedback from over 9,000 project beneficiaries in a total of 08 batches of data collection from November 2022 – February 2024. Findings from all batches and cumulative progress were shared /reported formally to ITC to provide clarity on performance status. Once the revised Logical Framework was formally circulated by ITC PMU, the surveys at output level were discontinued and PPAF GRASP M&E Team developed and tested a tool for ITC PMU M&E focal to collect performance data against Outcome level indicators. Two rounds of Outcome level beneficiary feedback surveys were conducted. During first round conducted in March – April 2024, the tool developed by PPAF GRASP M&E team for grants tracking was adapted for outcome tracking and employed using ODK - online smart phone-based data collection approach, using POs for reaching and collecting information from beneficiary SMEs including primary producers. A total of 9,701 responses were collected from GRASP beneficiaries and data once reviewed and cleaned 9,300 of these were accepted for further analysis and precipitation of results. These results numbers were later reported to EU and projected on GRASP MIS dashboard. The second round of GRASP Outcome survey was conducted in June – July 2025 and responses were collected from an additional 16,273 project beneficiaries of which 12,119 responses were accepted based on analysis of collected data. The results (Outcome level Indicator) numbers highlighted earlier in the report are based on this data of 21,419 (9300 + 12,119) responses collected by PPAF GRASP M&E team through POs in coordination with ITC team.

Alongside PPAF GRASP M&E addressed significant discrepancies identified in routine progress and results data reported in GRASP MIS. This largely stemmed from inconsistency, absence and non-standardization of supporting documents and evidence and collation, validation and verification of



Partner Organization	Accepted	Rejected	Grand total
GSF	5,763	160	5,923
TRDP	5,073	65	5,138
TF	3,391	97	3,488
RDF	2,652	49	2,701
BRSP	1,799	12	1,811
SPO	1,808	1	1,809
SAFWCO	929	10	939
ITC	4	7	11
Grand total	21,419	401	21,820

numbers reported before onboarding of PPAF. The vague comprehension of progress indicators, varying staff capacity, and differing interpretations of progress and results reporting resulted in mixing of progress and results numbers and mismatch of reported numbers with provided MoVs was also a driver to inflated results numbers reported. To resolve these issues, a comprehensive data validation and verification exercise was conducted in April to May 2023 for submissions by all implementing partners by comparing reported values against the available Means of Verification (MoVs). The exercise resulted in updating numbers against different indicators' targets and also

formally shared with the EU and all project partners to have correct and credible project results numbers backed by proper evidence. By systematically verifying all MoVs, PPAF GRASP M&E team with support from MIS, strengthened the accuracy and reliability of its reported results, thereby enhancing the credibility of project performance data for the EU, partners, and stakeholders.

Addressing these discrepancies significantly improved the alignment between indicators and actual project delivery. This ensured that reported achievements more accurately reflected on-ground progress, enabling clearer pathways to measurement of outcomes and long-term changes. Collectively, these improvements created a stronger foundation for evidence-based decision-making and effective programme implementation, enhancing both accountability and strategic relevance for the donor. The M&E review of data and reported progress also highlighted challenges in linking output level achievements to outcome level indicators. This triggered comprehensive teams' discussions through the TWG platform to review and revisit interpretation of the intervention logic which revealed structural limitations within the existing log-frame and consequently, a log-frame review and updating exercise was commissioned by EU, to have it aligned with standard logframe design and approach used for EU projects. This resulted in the current updated logframe used for project reporting since 2024. For teams ease of reporting in MIS, the M&E and MIS teams mapped indicators from old logframe with the updated one.

7.5 Output and Outcome Monitoring

Once PPAF GRASP M&E team had laid the required infrastructure for results tracking and reporting and completed its review of the past results numbers, the M&E team maintained regular and systematic tracking of results progress in MIS, also validated the same through engaging expert consultants and supported the third-party monitoring and reviews commissioned by EU.

Two separate results tracking exercises were conducted 1) at Output level (old logframe) and 2) at Outcome level (revised logframe). To report progress against the then Output level indicators, feedback from over 9,000 project beneficiaries was collected in 08 batches of data collection from November 2022 – February 2024, by PPAF GRASP M&E team supported by PPAF AMU team. Findings were shared with ITC and other stakeholders.

At Outcome level two rounds of beneficiary feedback surveys were conducted and already detailed in earlier section 7.4 collecting and analyzing responses against GRASP outcome level indicators. These results numbers were later reported to EU and projected on GRASP MIS dashboard. The complete and clean dataset has been shared with ITC M&E focal for further analysis and results reporting.

Against the traditional approach of sample-based results assessment, the team under direction of ITC project management attempted to reach beneficiaries en-masse, ultimately reaching a total of 25,974 of which 21,419 complete responses were used for reporting against outcome indicators, reflecting project progress at this level.

In addition, EU commissioned separate Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) in July 2022, mid-term review in August 2023 and final evaluation of the project in October 2025 by engaging third party firms. PPAF GRASP M&E and operations team facilitated the desk review, MIS data access and analysis, field data collection per schedule and requirements highlighted by these firms. PPAF POs facilitated all the data collection efforts of third-party firm and made sure they get the required outreach to rural SMEs and other stakeholders at local level.

7.6 Monitoring of Matching Grants' Beneficiaries

PPAF GRASP M&E team closely tracked the process of awarding and implementing matching grants. It involved the monitoring of grants application process, due diligence, pitching, agreements and implementation of the approved business plan. Once the grant agreement had been made, it focused on assessing SME performance viz grant implementation, identify bottle necks and gaps and mobilize relevant program and PO teams for required support to help complete plan in given timeframe. It also focused on use of grant amount and helping ensure its appropriate utilization.

A total of 399 matching grants awarded in both Sindh and Balochistan were monitored for compliance and proper utilization of amount. The PMU and provincial M&E teams along with BD team carried out this rigorous monitoring of grantees. The team also monitored risks related to procurement, delays, and compliance, enabling timely corrective actions. The results informed corrective actions that strengthened implementation, documentation consistency, procurement compliance, and reporting arrangements. These exercises improved audit preparedness and enhanced SME and relevant PO documentation practices and record keeping. PPAF internal audit and PPAF GRASP Finance carried out additional checks and reviews of financial transactions, reporting and documentation to verify consistency in reported numbers and documents.

PPAF GRASP M&E, with support from BD team, conducted periodic grants tracking exercises with the primary aim of collecting and compiling credible data, providing basis for analytical analysis for insights into the utilization of Matching Grants (MG), business performance especially related to outcome level indicators including sales turnover, FTE, investment in green tech, access to finance /loans mobilized from FIs etc. The first such tracking exercise was conducted in both Sindh and Balochistan during July - October 2023 for assessing the utilization and performance of matching grants provided to the SMEs. A total of 249 MG beneficiary SMEs from Cycle I & II of matching grants were covered through this exercise.

Table 15: MG Beneficiary SME Tracking - 2023

Province	MG Category (PKR)	No of SMEs Tracked
Sindh	500,000	109
	2,500,000	17
	30,000,000	9
Subtotal		**135**
Balochistan	500,000	91
	2,500,000	19
	30,000,000	4
Subtotal		**114**
Total		**249**

The second tracking exercise was conducted in both Sindh and Balochistan during September - October 2024 with same purpose of assessing utilization and performance of matching grants provided to the SMEs. This tracking covered 356 MG beneficiary SMEs from Cycle I, II & III of matching grants.

Table 16: MG Beneficiary SME Tracking - 2024

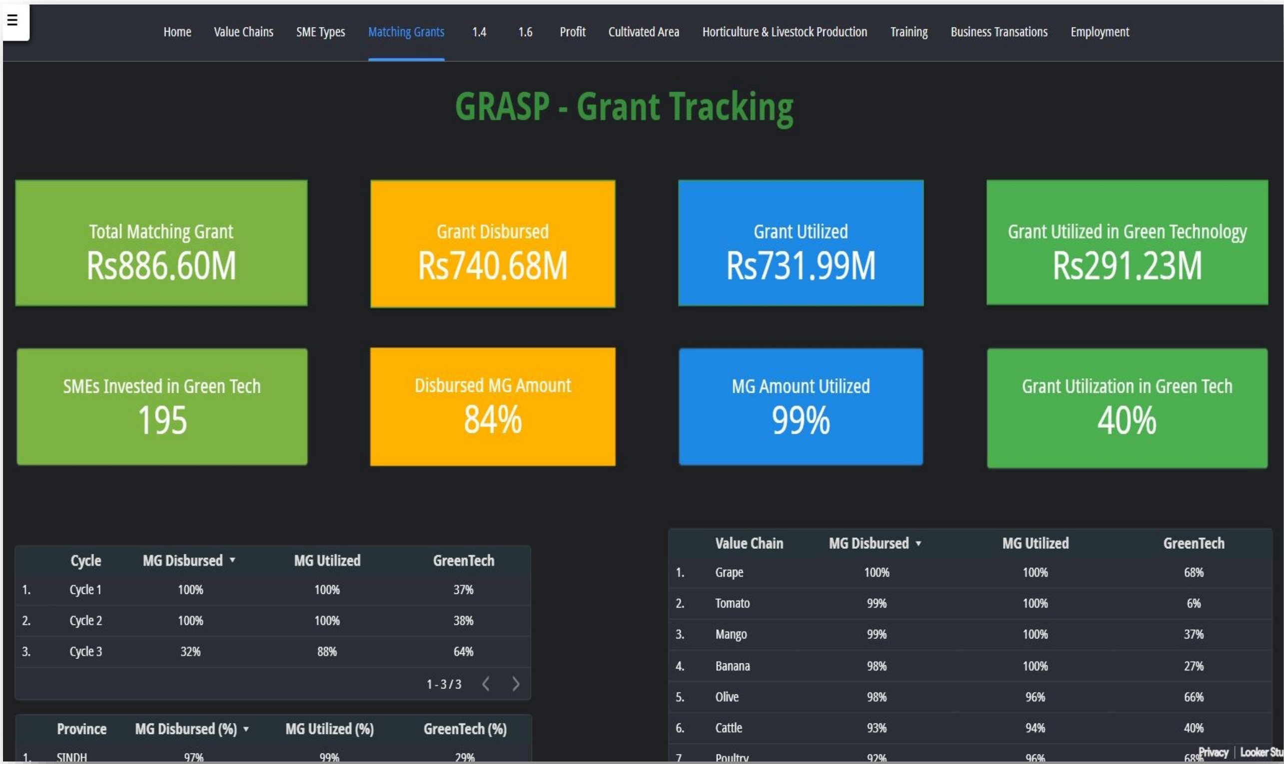
Province	MG Category (PKR)	No of SMEs Tracked
Sindh	500,000	146
	2,500,000	20
	30,000,000	10
Subtotal		**176**
Balochistan	500,000	131
	2,500,000	39
	30,000,000	10
Subtotal		**180**
Total		**356**

The third tracking exercise was conducted in both provinces during November 2025 just before the project closed. It was with same purpose of assessing utilization and performance of matching grants provided to the SMEs and same grants tracking tool was used, however data was collected by PO teams using ODK based tool under general supervision and guidance of PPAF GRASP M&E, MIS and BD team. This tracking covered 394 (Out of total 399) MG beneficiary SMEs from Cycle I, II, III & IV of matching grants. 05 of the SMEs could not be reached primarily out of security concerns in some of the operating areas. These included 04 SMEs i.e. two in goat value chain, 01 in Sheep and 01 in Onion in Balochistan and one SME in Cattle value chain in Sindh province.

Table 17: MG Beneficiary SME Tracking - 2025

Province	MG Category (PKR)	No of SMEs Tracked
BALOCHISTAN	500,000	139
	2,500,000	44
	10,000,000	5
	20,000,000	6
	30,000,000	10
Subtotal		**204**
SINDH	500,000	145
	2,500,000	22
	10,000,000	3
	20,000,000	10
	30,000,000	10
Subtotal		**190**
Total		**394**

Overall, the data collected provided information on key aspects of SMEs business such as changes in investment, sale and profit (numbers highlighted earlier in Access to Finance section) of beneficiary SMEs as well as it captured information on other support provided by GRASP partners such as trainings, exposure, linkages, gender inclusion and loan facilitation. Additionally, matching grants tracking provided detailed insights into changes in productivity, business expansion, and income patterns among supported SMEs. These surveys strengthened the evidence base for assessing the programme's contribution to enterprise-level transformation. Field verification, documentation review, and engagement with beneficiaries showed that grants had catalyzed business innovation, growth, profitability and investment in green tech which had influenced other SMEs in respective value chains to follow suite. The results of tracking were highlighted through a dedicated dashboard in GRASP MIS.



7.7 Capacity Building of GRASP Partners

The purpose of this exercise had been to help GRASP partners with necessary skills and capacity for effective monitoring of work under implementation, quality data and supporting MoVs, effective reporting and communication of the results using MIS and MIS based tools as a primary tool. Capacity Building and orientation events for M&E, program /field staff of partners and POs has been a continuous process through life of project with formal sessions organized whenever a new M&E /MIS system update or tool was piloted /fielded and as and when asked by partners or upon a new staff joining. These sessions both in person and online, in groups and on one-to-one basis have been conducted regularly and especially at important milestones of the project implementation e.g. piloting of SME Data form, process and results reporting, use of grants tracking tool and interface, Outcome and Output level feedback surveys and for efficient use of project MIS. PPAF GRASP M&E team worked closely with PO M&E and program teams to help understanding and strengthen technical knowhow for quality implementation and results achievement. Some of the key capacity building /training /orientation events during project life were;

- SME Data form
- M&E Strategy and its important components.
- Defining and Linking GRASP Logframe, indicators and understanding results framework.
- Training and orientation on progress and results reporting through MIS.
- GRASP Partners' training on partner specific data integration in GRSP MIS.
- Training on use of MIS, key resources and reported data for analysis and report generation.
- Effective use of M&E tools (e.g. Grants Tracking tool, Policy review and tracking tool, Training reporting tool, activity / process spot checking tool and Output and Outcome survey tools).
- Legacy data interface and reporting
- Collection and reporting of quality case studies and success stories from the field.

The PPAF GRASP M&E team through these sessions strengthened teams' understanding of the logframe, indicators, and reporting protocols. These trainings improved consistency and quality of reporting, enhanced technical capacity of partner teams for credible results reporting, and minimized discrepancies arising from varied interpretations. Partner staff were also trained on ODK formats /use of mobile phone-based data collection, enabling them to conduct surveys digitally and streamline data collection processes.

This continuous engagement for capacity building has ensured vigilant human resource with partner organizations having skills and capacity to work with and track SMEs /business performance across diverse portfolios. GRASP project marked a visible transition from a typical charity /household-based livelihoods approach for most of the partners and respective teams to working with for profit businesses /SMEs in a competitive environment. This meant acquiring a fresh view and re-positioning or getting new skills set altogether to work effectively for SMEs development. The M&E capacity building sessions provided the much-needed angle of tracking progress, identifying gaps, suggesting improvements and reporting of developments and results in this sense. This trained pool of human resource stays in focal areas with local partner organizations who have already started to mobilize new resources and partnerships to continue working for SME development. This has been an important contribution of GRASP project to supporting SME development echo system in Pakistan.

7.8 Progress /Analytical Reporting

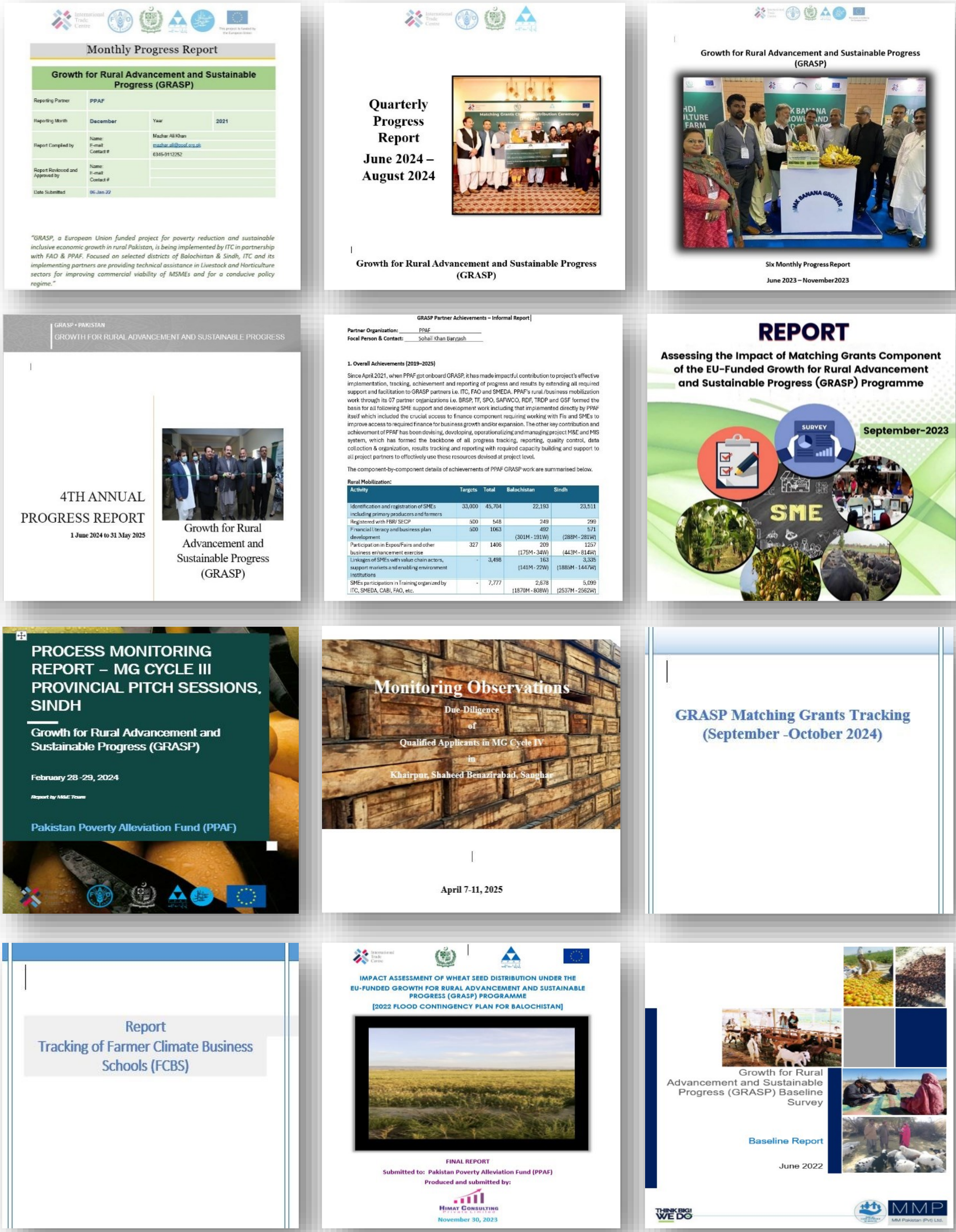
One of the key undertakings of PPAF GRASP M&E Team has been leading, compiling, verifying and finalizing the progress reports at different levels. This included the monthly progress report for entire project /all partners through MIS and supporting the GRASP PMU in compiling and processing the annual report for EU or any need-based report(s) required by any stakeholder. PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS teams furnished verified numbers, data, analysis and MoVs for these reports.

The second stream of reporting led by PPAF GRASP M&E team was that of PPAF progress reported to ITC on quarterly, six monthly and annual basis, covering PPAF and its seven POs' work over a specified period as etched in agreement between PPAF and ITC. The M&E team collated, verified, cross checked (with MIS and MOVs) reported numbers, processed analytical commentary of these and processed technical narrative reports for submission to ITC.

The third type of reports were M&E specific, for any field monitoring visits or assignments, detailed reports were processed and submitted to management, detailing objectives, findings with evidence and suggesting course correction within project scope. All PMU based and field M&E staff processed and submitted these reports upon completing a visit /assignment.

PPAF GRASP M&E team undertook tracer studies of project beneficiaries and also worked closely with different third-party consultants engaged for different studies and assignments under the project. M&E team, while it facilitated the field work, reviewed and technically analyzed findings and reports by these consultants. This included resources engaged by PPAF, those by EU and ITC. All this helped quality review and reporting by third party consultants.

PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS team also worked extensively to design, run and process **results progress reports** that were shared with ITC and ultimately with EU and other stakeholders of project. These reports clarified performance status, verified partner submissions, and highlighted areas requiring targeted support. This regular analysis enabled the entire project team to ensure consistency in reporting, validate assumptions and MOVs, and maintain quality assurance across all programme components.


Monthly Progress Report
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)
Quarterly Progress Report
June 2024 – August 2024
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)
Six Monthly Progress Report
June 2023 – November2023
GRASP • PAKISTAN
GROWTH FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS
4TH ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)
GRASP Partner Achievements – Informal Report
1. Overall Achievements (2019–2025)
REPORT
Assessing the Impact of Matching Grants Component of the EU-Funded Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) Programme
September-2023
SME
PROCESS MONITORING REPORT – MG CYCLE III PROVINCIAL PITCH SESSIONS, SINDH
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP)
February 28 -29, 2024
Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF)
Monitoring Observations
Due-Diligence
of
Qualified Applicants in MG Cycle IV
in
Khairpur, Shaheed Benazirabad, Sanghar
April 7-11, 2025
GRASP Matching Grants Tracking
(September -October 2024)
Report
Tracking of Farmer Climate Business Schools (FCBS)
IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF WHEAT SEED DISTRIBUTION UNDER THE EU-FUNDED GROWTH FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS (GRASP) PROGRAMME
[2022 FLOOD CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR BALOCHISTAN]
FINAL REPORT
Submitted to: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF)
Produced and submitted by:
HIMAT CONSULTING
November 30, 2023
Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) Baseline Survey
Baseline Report
June 2022
THINK BIG! WE DO
MMP

7.9 Matching Grants Beneficiary SME Records' Standardization

PO teams in both Sindh and Balochistan initially faced substantial challenges in maintaining MG beneficiary SME records and documentation quality, including incomplete procurement records, missing bank /transaction details /money trail, incomplete tax documentation, weak and inconsistent milestone completion evidence, inconsistent SME files, and fragmented Means of Verification (MoVs). These issues created barriers to accurate verification, compliance, and audit readiness across the Matching Grants portfolio. PPAF's internal audit team also pointed out the discrepancies and gaps in SME records, especially those pertaining to use of grant amount. In response, the PPAF GRASP M&E team in close coordination with PPAF GRASP Finance team designed standard checklist for all grant files and also devised standard formats for some of the records e.g. milestone completion report template.

From June 2024, GRASP PPAF M&E, Finance and BD undertook extensive one-to-one support to all POs in updating and completing respective MG beneficiary SME files per standard checklist. Detailed review of all individual SME files was initiated, at times spanning days identify gaps, and introduce corrective action(s) then and there. Where records were missing and to be sourced, follow-up field visits and document reviews were undertaken to ensure completeness. Alongside a similar interface was made in GRASP MIS to have a soft co py /scan of file readily available whenever required. M&E Team processed detailed reports, noting issues and gaps with SME files and shared with concerned.

Structured milestone verification processes were institutionalized, and partners were guided to have standardized MoVs and have those uploaded to MIS as well to ensure transparency, traceability, and alignment with GRASP's compliance requirements. The process of SME file review continued well into 2025, where on periodic basis teams reviewed new and old files as the grants process progressed.

By 2025, documentation practices improved significantly across both provinces, with SMEs and POs adopting more rigorous, organized, and verifiable record-keeping systems, enhancing audit preparedness and strengthening their ability to confidently engage with financial institutions, markets, and regulatory bodies. The review of records related to MG process and individual SME grant utilization per approved plan and maintaining proper evidence for it helped all POs in ensuring compliance to MG guidelines, grant agreement, adherence to procurement guidelines and that required for GRASP financial reporting. This exercise reduced inconsistencies, improved documentation quality, and strengthened accountability across this crucial component of the project.

7.10 Sustainability Strategy

PPAF GRASP M&E and MIS team worked extensively since 2021 to have a structured system of GRASP progress data collection, its verification and to have credible results numbers with all supporting MoVs in one place. Alongside developing a comprehensive database of over 45,000 SMEs and primary producers working in GRASP focused eleven horticultural and Livestock value chains. This kind of detailed SME data was nonexistent at onset of project and while it served project implementers for targeting local SMEs it can be a very good source of linking and benefiting SMEs, Private sector, FIs, Chambers, Exporters, Lead firms and regulators. In line with GRASP exit and sustainability strategy, this data will be shared with POs, FIs, Local Government Departments and other stakeholders for future work with identified SMEs in the select 11 value chains.

GRASP as a whole strengthened sustainability by investing in technical and managerial capacities of farmers, SMEs, and local partners through targeted training in agribusiness management, market linkages, and value chain development. These efforts were continuously reinforced through strong monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure adaptive, evidence-based implementation.

By embedding sustainability principles across its interventions, working and supporting replicable climate smart business plans /models and fostering strong engagement with local stakeholders, PPAF has positioned GRASP interventions as enduring agribusiness ecosystems with lasting socio-economic benefits for communities in the target regions. The GRASP M&E function played a critical role in ensuring credibility and strengthening accountability to reflect real change on the ground. Through rigorous verification and standardization of results the M&E team helped transform fragmented SME datasets into coherent and reliable evidence base for decision-making and future projects and interventions for SME development and engagement.

The strong focus on capacity building of teams and local partners helped internalize the departure from traditional approach to poverty alleviation. The trained local human resource in access to finance, business development, business plan development and implementation skills, business /SME monitoring, record keeping, networking and market linkages will continue to benefit local businesses through other avenues and programs.

7.11 EU and ITC Field Missions & Oversight

Date	Location	Mission / Participants	Purpose of Mission
Oct 2023	Karachi & Hyderabad, Sindh	EU Delegation, ITC, PPAF, Sindh POs	Field verification of GRASP interventions; interaction with SMEs; review of value-chain investments; EU visibility
Oct 2023	Quetta, Balochistan	EU Delegation, ITC, PPAF, Balochistan POs	Assessment of GRASP progress in Balochistan; SME visits; Provincial Steering Committee (PSC) meeting
Nov 2024	Karachi, Tando Allahyar & Matiari, Sindh	EU & ITC Joint Mission, PPAF, SAFWCO/TRDP	Review of matching grants and SME performance; site visits; PSC Sindh meeting; stakeholder dialogue
Nov 2024	Karachi, Sindh	EU & ITC, PPAF	Inauguration of GRASP-supported Karachi Training Centre (KTC); PSC Sindh meeting; EU visibility
Oct 2025	Karachi, Sindh	EU Parliamentarians, EU Delegation, ITC, PPAF	High-level field visit to showcase GRASP results; interaction with SMEs; policy and results dialogue
Nov 2025	Karachi & Quetta	EU Head of Cooperation & Senior EU Delegation, ITC, PPAF	Senior-level review of GRASP outcomes; SME and facility visits; strategic discussions on results and lessons learned
Nov 2025	Quetta, Balochistan	EU Delegation, ITC, PPAF, Balochistan POs	PSC Balochistan meeting; review of matching grants, livelihoods, and SME interventions

PPAF, in close coordination with its Partner Organizations (POs), facilitated multiple EU Delegation and ITC missions across Sindh and Balochistan under the GRASP Project. These missions included field monitoring visits, inauguration events and implementation support, providing EU and ITC representatives with direct on-ground verification of outputs and emerging outcomes, while strengthening accountability, learning, and strategic oversight of project implementation. The missions also enabled EU and ITC representatives to engage directly with GRASP-supported SMEs, including women-led, climate-resilient, and value-added enterprises, and reinforced coordination among PPAF, POs, government counterparts, financial institutions, and development partners. Visits by EU Parliamentarians and senior EU leadership further validated the credibility and maturity of the PPAF-led, PO-driven delivery model.

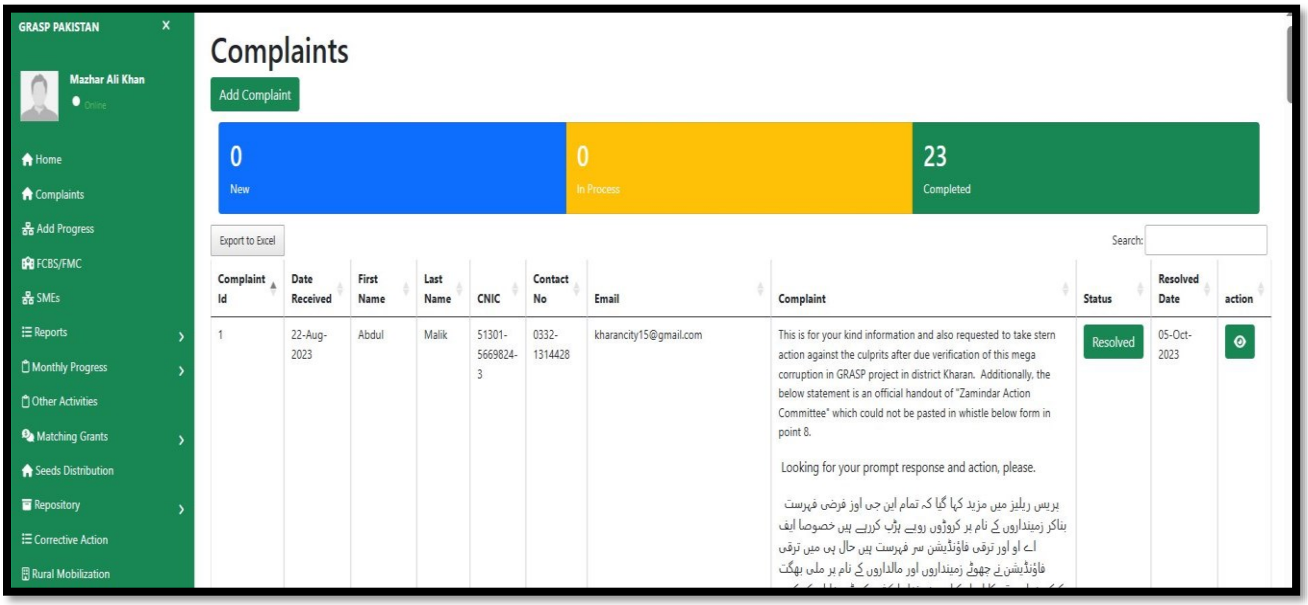
The missions also significantly enhanced visibility and communication of GRASP results. Field visits and inaugurations showcased tangible EU-funded investments, supported by coordinated outreach by PPAF and POs, with prominent EU branding and acknowledgment at project sites and public events. Key learning underscored the effectiveness of localized, PO-led implementation, the importance of adaptive management, and the value of SME co-investment and blended finance approaches in strengthening ownership, reducing fiduciary risk, and supporting sustainability beyond the project lifecycle.

8 Grievance Redressal Mechanism

A Grievance Redressal Mechanism (Annex - V) was designed and implemented (duly approved by the ITC) which included the following:

1. Creation of a dedicated online portal, which was highlighted prominently at the main page of the GRASP MIS i.e. https://graspmis.ppaf.org.pk/, where complainants could lodge their complaints.
2. Creation of a dedicated email address i.e., GRASP-complaints@ppaf.org.pk, where complainants can directly lodge complaints with the PPAF.
3. Display of Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) information at the beneficiary level, PO level, and project offices websites.

The received complaints were entered in Project MIS. Upon the receipt of the complaints, they were thoroughly investigated and the results were updated on Project MIS (https://graspmis.ppaf.org.pk/Home/ListComplaints). During the project tenure, a total of 23 genuine complaints were received (list attached as Annex - VI), which were all thoroughly investigated per the established mechanism and closed /resolved in line with agreed guidelines. The summary of received complaints along with their resolution status were timely communicated to the ITC.



9 Financial Progress

PPAF GRASP Budget: SUMMARY OF UTILIZATION – DRAFT as of 30-November-2025

TOTAL BUDGET VERSUS EXPENDITURE SINCE INCEPTION TO 30 November 2025						
Sr #	Description	US $				
		Total Amended Budget	Total Expenditure Inception to 30-Nov-2025	Utilization rate %	Remaining Budget	Remaining Budget %
1	Mobilization and field activities	10,405,881	10,012,792	96%	393,088	4%
2	Monitoring evaluation and audit activities	186,454	176,918	95%	9,536	5%
3	Management Information System and IT costs	90,928	83,519	92%	7,409	8%
4	Staff salary	1,852,283	1,774,827	96%	77,456	4%
5	PPAF travel and logistics costs	587,478	463,843	79%	123,635	21%
6	PPAF overheads cost	598,841	559,937	94%	38,905	6%
7	Flood contingency plan	347,159	347,159	100%	-	0%
	TOTAL	**14,069,025**	**13,418,995**	**95%**	**650,030**	**5%**
	Reduction by ITC - letter to CEO 25-Nov-25	(455,582)			(455,582)	
	Reduced budget	**13,613,443**	**13,418,995**	**99%**	**194,448**	**1%**

The financial performance of the PPAF component under the Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) programme demonstrates strong budget absorption, disciplined financial management, and effective alignment of expenditures with programmatic priorities over the full implementation period. As of 30 November 2025, total expenditure reached USD 13.42 million against a total budget of USD 14.07 million, reflecting an overall utilization rate of 95%. Following a formal budget reduction of USD 455,582 communicated by ITC in November 2025, the revised available budget stood at USD 13.61 million, against which reported utilization is 99%, leaving a marginal balance of USD 194,448 (1%).

Mobilization and Field Activities

Mobilization and field activities constitute the largest cost component, accounting for USD 10.01 million in expenditure against an amended budget of USD 10.41 million, achieving a 96% utilization rate. This high absorption reflects the scale and intensity of PPAF's core responsibilities under GRASP, including rural and business mobilization, SME identification and validation, facilitation of Farmer Climate Business Schools (FCBS) and Farmer Market Collectives (FMCs), and coordination with multiple implementing /partner organizations across Sindh and Balochistan.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Audit

Expenditure on monitoring, evaluation, and audit activities reached USD 176,918, representing 95% utilization of the allocated budget. This reflects sustained investment in outcome tracking, verification, implementation monitoring, and audit readiness, consistent with EU requirements for evidence-based reporting and accountability. The near-full utilization demonstrates that M&E was integral to credible tracking and reporting on results, outcomes, and learning.

Management Information System (MIS) and IT Costs

MIS and IT expenditures amounted to USD 83,519, corresponding to a 92% utilization rate. These resources supported the development and operation of SME databases, grants tracking system, and outcome monitoring tools that underpinned implementation across value chains.

Staff Salaries

Staff salary costs totalled USD 1.77 million, achieving 96% utilization of the amended allocation. This reflects stable staffing structures throughout implementation, with teams retained to manage extended field operations, coordination functions, access-to-finance facilitation, and monitoring responsibilities. The close alignment between budget and actuals indicates sound human resource planning and controlled personnel costs over a multi-year implementation horizon.

Travel and Logistics

PPAF travel and logistics costs show a comparatively lower utilization of 79%, with expenditures of USD 463,843 against a budget of USD 587,478, leaving a balance of USD 123,635 (21%). This underspend can be attributed to a combination of factors, including adaptive field planning, effective use of resources with local partner organizations, security-related travel constraints in parts of Balochistan, and efficiency gains through clustering of activities and remote coordination where feasible. Importantly, the lower utilization did not adversely affect field delivery, as core mobilization and monitoring functions were sustained through decentralized implementation arrangements.

Overheads

PPAF overhead costs reached USD 559,937, representing 94% utilization. This indicates effective control of indirect costs while ensuring adequate institutional support for programme delivery, financial management, compliance, and reporting. Overheads remained proportionate to the scale of operations and consistent with ITC /EU expectations on cost efficiency.

Flood Contingency Plan

The Flood Contingency Plan was fully utilized (100%), with USD 347,159 expended. This reflects timely activation of contingency resources in response to the floods in Balochistan and underscores the programme's adaptive capacity and responsiveness to external risks.

Budget Reduction and Final Position

The USD 455,582 budget reduction communicated late in the implementation period was absorbed without disruption to delivery, reflecting prudent financial planning and adaptation. Post-reduction, the programme achieved a 99% utilization rate, leaving only 1% unspent, which is well within acceptable thresholds at closure and indicative of strong end-of-project financial discipline.

Note: The figures are (tentative) /subject to change as final verification by ITC is pending. Moreover, 2nd last tranche is still pending from ITC; the exchange rate applied for the reported numbers is the latest rate available. Once the pending payment is received in GRASP account, exchange rate will be revised and report submitted to ITC.

10 Key Lessons Learned

GRASP demonstrated that combining matching grants, financial linkages, and capacity building offers a highly cost-effective and scalable model for rural SME development. Evidence and results show that this integrated approach enabled SMEs to access formal finance, invest in value addition and technology, and generate income and employment more rapidly than farmers organizations platform or policy heavy interventions. By directly targeting SMEs, the approach also created market demand that pushed and pulled input suppliers, farmers, primary producers, and other value chain actors and support market players toward improved productivity and standards, making it well suited to resource constrained settings.

The Access to Finance intervention under GRASP has transformed the financial landscape for rural

Aspect	Before GRASP	After GRASP
Access to Formal Credit	Rural SMEs relied heavily on informal lending or personal savings with limited capacity for expansion.	520 loans processed through formal institutions, increasing access to structured finance and business growth capital.
Financial Readiness	Weak record-keeping and lack of credit history prevented SMEs from qualifying for loans.	Financial Literacy & Business Planning training and periodic SME records review and feedback improved documentation, budgeting, and creditworthiness.
Investment in Value Addition	SMEs operated with outdated tools, operations, production methods and limited infrastructure.	Grant, Loans, trainings, exposure /awareness and linkages enabled procurement of modern equipment (solar dryers, packaging units, livestock feed mills, etc.), improved production practices, diversification resulting in enhanced productivity and quality.
Women's Participation	Women entrepreneurs were largely excluded from financing systems.	214 women-led SMEs accessed finance for business improvement, marking a shift toward inclusive lending.

SMEs by combining credit access with capacity building and technical support. The initiative not only increased liquidity for business growth but also cultivated financial discipline, record-keeping culture, and entrepreneurial confidence. As a result, hundreds of SMEs have transitioned from informal to semi-formal business operations demonstrating tangible before-and-after improvements in financial access, enterprise productivity, and sustainability across both Sindh and Balochistan.

With PPAF's and its POs extensive understanding of local dynamics, and extensive experience working across rural districts enabled /facilitated all core partners i.e. ITC, FAO, SMEDA and service providers engaged by them to approach, implement and complete their respective interventions effectively and efficiently. Without this grass roots level understanding and anchorage, the GRASP projects' foothold would have been challenging, and the celebrated results today may not have materialized within the given timeframe.

Partner Organizations' deep local roots enabled GRASP to achieve results despite crises, ensuring continuity and impact under extreme challenges.

When the GRASP project commenced, Pakistan was already experiencing challenging circumstances marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating floods, security concerns, extremism, active insurgency in places, socio-economic pressures, and political instability. In this kind of operating environment, the engagement of local Partner Organizations proved to be critical. Their longstanding community presence, deep understanding of local dynamics, and extensive experience working across rural districts enabled all GRASP core partners to implement and complete their interventions effectively and efficiently. Without their engagement, the GRASP project would have faced considerable challenges and may not have achieved its objectives, results, and impact within the planned timeframe.

PPAF's commitment - timely bridge financing kept GRASP operational.
Generally, bridge financing is not considered a preferred approach and is often discouraged by PPAF and other development Organizations. However, considering the critical nature of PPAF's role i.e. rural /business mobilization across project, access to finance especially considering matching grants approval and implementation timeframes, tracking and monitoring across entire program for helping in quality implementation and sustaining momentum of implementation, had PPAF not bridge financed (almost PKR. 1008 million), GRASP operations for most part would have halted. PPAF and its partner organizations extended bridge financing to keep crucial project activities operational, enabling seamless implementation across the board.

Regular joint planning and coordination fostered a unified "One GRASP" mindset, enhancing collaboration and delivery efficiency.
Regular mutual consultations, joint planning, and coordination through review workshops, periodic meetings (bi-weekly, monthly, annual and ad hoc) and joint forums like TWG, proved instrumental in fostering strong collaboration among partners. This inclusive process-built consensus, strengthened coordination, and promoted a unified "One GRASP" mindset, which greatly enhanced the efficiency, coherence, and overall effectiveness of project delivery.

Cluster meetings bridged field and core teams, driving real-time problem-solving and stronger alignment with community needs.
Cluster-level meetings proved to be a vital collaborative platform bringing together ITC, PPAF, FAO,SMEDA and Partner Organizations, and beneficiaries including FMCs, FCBs, SMEs including farmers and primary producers. These meetings fostered synergy across different GRASP partners /stakeholders, enabling open dialogue, knowledge and experience sharing, and joint problem solving. By bridging communication gaps between field teams and core partners, timely coordination, adaptive planning, and alignment of interventions with beneficiaries' evolving needs ultimately strengthened project delivery and impact at the grassroots level.

Greater investment in team capacity building is essential to sustain impact, efficiency, and institutional learning beyond project life.
While the GRASP project achieved strong outcomes, limited investment in structured capacity development constrained the full potential of team performance and sustainability. Continued and dedicated investment in strengthening project teams through targeted training, learning exchanges, and exposure opportunities is essential to sustain impact, enhance efficiency, and ensure long-term institutional growth especially when interventions like GRASP take an important and required departure from traditional way of poverty alleviation and economic development. This kind of investment also enhances the prospects of sustainability as trained human resource and evolved institutional systems continue to deliver benefits even when project has phased out.
Balancing compliance with impact orientation ensures administrative rigor without losing focus on development results.

Active involvement of project teams, especially PPAF GRASP M&E and BD in organizing and maintaining SMEs financial, procurement and other records significantly enhanced their understanding of financial management, audits, and compliance processes. The experience also highlighted the importance of balancing administrative diligence with a continued focus on results and impact. Strengthening teams' capacity to integrate both aspects has and will further improve efficiency and outcome-oriented delivery in future initiatives.

Matching Grants catalyzed SME innovation, productivity, and job creation, so successfully they inspired replication by government.
The provision of Access to Finance through Matching Grants proved to be a powerful catalyst for SME growth and rural economic development. This approach encouraged enterprises to co-invest, take calculated risks, and pursue innovation resulting in higher productivity, efficiency, and market expansion. In the context of Pakistan, Matching Grants have demonstrated strong potential to stimulate entrepreneurship, local investment, and sustainable livelihoods at the community level. The success of GRASP inspired replication at different levels from local organizations to Government. Participating in a GRASP event, the Chief Minister of Balochistan announced PKR 16 billion for a GRASP like initiative, and the PAIDAR project being redesigned on similar lines are evidence of GRASP's impact and influence.

Business-oriented rural mobilization empowered SMEs through mentoring, exposure, and market linkages, driving inclusive local growth.
The GRASP project demonstrated that business oriented rural mobilization is a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and resilience. By engaging SMEs, primary producers and value chain actors through orientations, mentoring, and exposure visits supported by in-person outreach, media campaigns, and capacity-building efforts, GRASP fostered ownership, innovation, networking, awareness, partnerships and sustainability. Continuous handholding and supervision, even in challenging contexts, linked SMEs to markets and opportunities, enhanced visibility, and promoted learning. This dynamic approach transformed rural entrepreneurs into active, connected, and resilient economic drivers of local development in Pakistan.

GRASP MIS enabled data-driven decisions; building user capacity unlocked potential for accountability and learning.
A key lesson from GRASP is the value of a robust and adaptive Management Information System (MIS) in effective decision making, tracking and reporting of achievements and results. Developed by PPAF GRASP MIS team in close support by M&E team and in close coordination with ITC, the MIS became a central and dependable repository for credible real-time data, performance tracking, and informed decision-making. Its continuous upgrading reflected strong relevance, technical planning and clarity of scope. The experience also highlighted that the true impact of such systems depends on the consistent engagement and investment in capacity building of partner teams to effectively use the platform for data-driven management and accountability.

Strategic event management amplified GRASP visibility nationwide, positioning it as a model for innovation and entrepreneurship.
The power of strategic event management in amplifying GRASP visibility, outreach, and stakeholder engagement at all levels (District, Provincial, National and beyond). Events successfully brought together Federal and Provincial Ministers, Secretaries, Governors, Chief Minister, government officials, chambers, associations, unions, value chain actors, and support market players. These events widely covered across print, electronic, and social media reached tens of millions. Initiatives like provincial level events, district level hackathons and International Day celebrations not only

highlighted GRASP achievements but also positioned it as a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic growth in Sindh and Balochistan.

SME training in financial and business skills fostered behavioral change and self-investment, strengthening enterprise sustainability.
Capacity building in financial literacy, management, record keeping, business planning, and pitching skills combined with exposure visits, expo participation, and practical learning significantly enhanced SMEs' competencies under GRASP. These interventions served as powerful drivers of behavioral change, motivating entrepreneurs to invest in their own growth. Future initiatives could achieve even greater impact by extending enterprise development trainings and some crucial certifications for SMEs including farmers /primary producers, enabling them to operate as more competitive, market /export-oriented businesses.

Simplifying /evolving Matching Grant processes, enhanced inclusivity, innovation, and development impact.
Approximately 10% of GRASP total budget i.e. USD 5.5 million was allocated to the Matching Grant facility, which amplified by exchange gains enabled a larger number of grants awarded. Matching Grants proved to be the most visible and impactful intervention in GRASP, driving income generation, job creation, business expansion, and increased sales turnover and business transactions with national and internation buyers. However, the rigorous, multi-stage, and documentation heavy process, though ensuring transparency and accountability, unintentionally discouraged many semi-literates and undocumented yet viable SMEs from participating, resulting in the loss some of strong business ideas. The simplified approach piloted in the 4th cycle demonstrated that streamlined and entrepreneur friendly procedures can maintain due diligence while promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and innovation key factors for maximizing the development impact of future programs.

GRASP transformed POs into SME enablers - strengthening institutions, winning follow-up projects (e.g., BRSP, TRDP and SAFWCO), and advancing staff careers across the development sector.
Building the capacity of Partner Organizations to transition from traditional livelihood-focused interventions to SME development substantially enhanced their institutional strength and staff competencies. Through continuous mentoring, technical guidance, hands-on support and on the job training of the staff, POs gained the confidence to engage with commercially viable enterprises. As a result, organizations like BRSP, TRDP and SAFWCO secured major follow-up projects such as the Government of Balochistan initiative, PAIDAR and WHH (Welthungerhilfe) respectively, while several trained staff members were recruited by other projects/organizations with competitive salary packages reflecting GRASP lasting impact on sectoral capacity and employability.

Focusing on a few high-potential value chains enables deeper engagement and more sustainable SME impact.
One of the key lessons from GRASP is that focus, and specialization are critical to achieving deeper and more sustainable impact in SME and value chain development. Working simultaneously across eleven distinct value chains presented significant coordination and resource challenges, often diluting the intensity of technical support and market facilitation that could be provided to each subsector. Future programmes could achieve greater depth and measurable transformation by concentrating efforts on a smaller number of value chain subsectors, allowing for more tailored interventions, stronger market linkages, and better alignment with private sector demand and government priorities.

Integrated and Sequenced Design Catalyzes Sustainable Growth:
Combining financial support through Matching Grants with business training, financial literacy, mentoring, and market exposure created a multiplier effect on enterprise performance. SMEs that

benefitted from both grants and capacity-building interventions demonstrated greater productivity, improved compliance with quality and financial standards, and enhanced access to formal credit. Moreover, the progressive refinement of grant cycles through strengthened eligibility, due diligence, and milestone verification improved proposal quality, financial accountability, and governance discipline.

Climate-Smart and Green Innovation is Attainable:
The program demonstrated that environmental sustainability and profitability can coexist. With around 80% of SMEs adopting green technologies. GRASP proved that rural enterprises readily embrace eco-efficient business models when investment barriers are reduced through co-financing, technical guidance, and mentorship.

Women-Led Enterprises Deliver High Economic and Social Returns:
Despite lower participation numbers, they showed stronger resilience and higher percentage gains in income and reinvestment, making a compelling business case for gender-focused enterprise facilitation. However, persistent barriers such as collateral requirements, mobility constraints, and limited access to finance underline the need for gender-responsive credit lines, flexible loan products, and simplified participation mechanisms.

Context-Specific Approaches Enhance Effectiveness:
Provincial variations underscored the importance of contextualization. Sindh's advanced market connectivity and market hubs enabled quicker business turnover, while Balochistan's dispersed SME clusters required stronger logistical, institutional, and infrastructural support. Tailoring interventions to local market realities, value chain strengths, and institutional capacity proved crucial for achieving equitable outcomes across provinces.

Formalization Unlocks Access to Finance and Growth:
The increase in SME registrations with FBR and SECP demonstrated that formalization is a vital gateway to finance, compliance, and long-term sustainability. Simplifying registration processes, coupled with continuous mentoring, enabled SMEs to transition from informal operations to structured business entities, enhancing their credibility and access to financial services.

Institutional Collaboration Strengthens Accountability and Performance:
Partnerships between financial institutions, implementing partners, and SMEs ensured rigorous due diligence, standardized documentation, improved loan utilization, and reduced default risks. The establishment of committee-based approval and verification systems contributed to transparency, improved proposal quality, and timely disbursements. These multi-stakeholder links also enhanced monitoring, learning, and adaptability.

Financial Readiness and Behavioral Change Are Critical Success Factors:
Capacity-building interventions in business planning, bookkeeping, and financial literacy significantly improved SMEs' ability to manage funds, plan investments, and maintain repayment schedules. The reinvestment rate reflects growing confidence, maturity, and a behavioral shift from dependency on grants toward self-sustained business growth. However, high lending rates remain a challenge for scaling long-term credit engagement.

Value Chain-Based and Climate-Smart Financing Models Are Effective:
Targeting specific value chains such as Dates, Mango, and Onion enhanced repayment performance, product quality, and enterprise viability. Linking finance with value chain dynamics and

environmental sustainability yielded both economic and climate-resilient outcomes, proving the effectiveness of integrated, sector-focused financial instruments.

Local Ownership and Community Engagement Drive Sustainability:
Strong local presence and community trust of partner organizations proved instrumental in mobilizing rural SMEs, ensuring participation, and fostering ownership. This locally driven model enabled a smooth transition from mobilization to maturity, transforming passive beneficiaries into proactive entrepreneurs. Replicating this model can strengthen future enterprise ecosystems and enhance scalability.

Mentorship and Continuous Support Ensure Long-Term Impact:
While many SMEs demonstrated strong business growth, several remain in early stages of institutional maturity. Ongoing mentorship, particularly in record-keeping, branding, procurement compliance, and marketing is essential to consolidate gains, sustain competitiveness, and prevent regression of post-GRASP.

Evidence-Based Monitoring Enhances Adaptability and Learning:
Robust monitoring, iterative data verification, and third-party assessments and evaluations created a strong feedback loop for course correction and scaling. These evidence systems not only strengthened accountability but also provided valuable insights for adaptive management and replication of successful practices in future programs.

The Integrated FCBS Model Builds Resilient Enterprises:
The Farmer Climate Business School (FCBS) approach by FAO, facilitated and supported by PPAF under GRASP, integrated entrepreneurship and climate adaptation within a single platform and effectively strengthened business resilience, productivity, and adaptive capacity among participating SMEs. Implementation in Balochistan characterized by operational, security, and accessibility risks was enabled through reliance on experienced local partner organizations, strict adherence to approved security protocols, and flexible field planning that allowed activities to be adapted to local conditions without compromising results. Beyond intended outcomes, the approach generated positive spill-over effects, including peer learning among enterprises and demonstration effects at community level. Some matching grant beneficiaries leveraged improved business readiness and expanded operations to access additional grant and financing opportunities under other interventions, while non-beneficiary SMEs adopted similar practices such as business registration, investment in improved technologies, enhanced packaging and marketing, and transitions toward cleaner and greener operations through observation and formal and informal knowledge exchange with project beneficiaries. This dual-focus model proved instrumental in linking economic empowerment with climate resilience and offers strong potential for replication across additional value chains in future programming, particularly in fragile and hard-to-reach contexts.

GRASP's experience confirms that integrated, gender-responsive, climate-smart, and locally grounded models yield the strongest development outcomes. The combination of financial inclusion, mentorship, institutional collaboration, and continuous evidence-based learning supported by adaptive implementation arrangements and localized risk mitigation strategies not only accelerated SME growth but also contributed to broader market behaviour changes, strengthened enterprise ecosystems, and improved access to finance beyond direct beneficiaries. Collectively, these effects helped lay a foundation for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient rural enterprise development in Sindh and Balochistan, while generating practical lessons for future EU-supported interventions operating in complex environments.

What challenges remain for sustainability after GRASP?

A key dilemma faced by many development initiatives, including GRASP, is the absence of a clearly defined post-project strategy, with most follow-up interventions being contingent on the availability of external and /or follow-up funding. There are no/limited after sales services in the projects.

Post-project sustainability often depends on the strength of partner organizations, financial autonomy, and community ownership. Many implementing partners and community organizations struggle to sustain interventions without continued technical and financial support, while heavy reliance on donor funding limits long-term viability. Moreover, when communities perceive initiatives as externally driven rather than self-owned, their motivation and participation tend to decline after project closure.

In the case of GRASP, the supported SMEs were not newly established enterprises or start-ups but rather existing market/value chain actors or support market players who had been operating and sustaining their businesses for several years prior to the project. GRASP primarily focused on enhancing their productivity and competitiveness providing over 80% of SMEs with support for technology adoption, innovation, and value addition rather than animal rearing or primary cultivation. These SMEs including farmers and primary producers thus entered the project with a certain level of capacity and market presence and are likely to continue operating beyond its closure.

Data /Lists of all beneficiaries /SMEs including farmers and primary producers, will be shared with the Government Agriculture and Livestock Ministries/Departments, Financial Institutions (Commercial Banks, Microfinance Institutions, and Microfinance Banks), Chambers of Commerce and Industry (men and women), Trade Associations/Unions, Local Administrations, and relevant Farmers' Groups such as the in Balochistan Zamindar Action Committee, Green Kisan Itihad, Kisan Itihad Pakistan etc. and the Sindh Abadgar Board, and Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) in Sindh, as well as the Women Development Department and other relevant stakeholders.

However, several challenges remain for sustainability after GRASP, particularly in ensuring that the progress achieved translates into long-term institutional, market, and policy outcomes.

Climate variability, political instability, and inflation continue to threaten SME resilience and value chain sustainability in horticulture and livestock sectors.

Beyond institutional and operational factors, several external challenges continue to threaten the sustainability of GRASP outcomes. As GRASP primarily focused on horticulture and livestock value chains, the sector remains highly vulnerable to climate/environmental change related shocks such as droughts, floods, and shifting weather patterns (heat and cold waves), different patterns of raining which can significantly disrupt production cycles and market stability. Additionally, political instability and inflationary pressures pose ongoing risks to business confidence, investment, and the purchasing power of rural communities.

Inclusion SMEs at the last stage of the project limited their access to mentoring and capacity-building support, affecting the depth and sustainability of outcomes.

A challenge to sustaining GRASP outcomes lies in the limited support /followup received by SMEs/matching grant grantees across the final grants cycle(s). Many SMEs engaged during the early years of the project benefited from comprehensive capacity-building interventions, continuous mentoring, technical supervision, tracking and follow-up support which significantly enhanced their performance and sustainability prospects. However, the matching grantees onboarded in the last especially the fourth cycle of the project did not receive the same degree of facilitation due to delays in decision-making regarding running of final grants cycle due to limited remaining implementation period. As a result, these SMEs had insufficient or no time to consolidate their capacities and market connections, potentially limiting the long-term sustainability of results.

The lack of tailored financial products for primary producers /farmers, women, and small producers constrains inclusive growth and long-term resilience.

The limited availability of tailored and accessible financial products particularly for smallholder farmers /primary producers, women entrepreneurs, and primary producers further constrains inclusive growth. Addressing these external factors through climate adaptation strategies, enabling policy environments, and inclusive financial systems will be critical for sustaining the resilience and gains achieved under GRASP.

Limited policy uptake and weak government ownership risk undermining GRASP long-term impact, as its successful SME and value chain models have yet to be institutionalized or scaled within provincial and national frameworks.

One of the key challenges for sustainability after GRASP lies in the limited policy uptake and weak institutional ownership at the government(s) level. While GRASP successfully demonstrated scalable models for SME development, value chain strengthening, market linkages, capacity building activities, these approaches have yet to be systematically integrated into provincial or national policies. The absence of formal mechanisms for public private partnership, coordination and limited government investment in enterprise and value chain development hinder the institutionalization of successful models like GRASP. Strengthening policy frameworks, embedding learnings into provincial agriculture and SME strategies/policies, and ensuring continuity through government led programs remain critical for sustaining the project's long-term impact.

Retaining skilled personnel trained under GRASP remains a challenge, as their departure after project closure erodes institutional memory, technical expertise, and continuity of impact.

One of the key post-project challenges for GRASP is retaining the skilled human capital developed during its implementation. Many trained staff from implementing partners /organizations tend to move on to other opportunities once project funding ends. This attrition leads to the loss of valuable institutional memory, technical expertise, and established beneficiary knowhow and business community relationship factors that are critical for sustaining market linkages, capacity-building initiatives, and enterprise development efforts initiated under GRASP or otherwise.

Sustaining GRASP inclusion gains for women, youth, and marginalized groups requires ongoing social mobilization and supportive policies to prevent regression after project closure.

While GRASP made significant progress in empowering women, youth, and marginalized producers through training, enterprise support, and inclusion in value chains, these gains risk regression without continued mobilization, mentoring and handholding, and enabling policies. Sustained institutional support and community engagement are essential to preserve inclusivity and ensure that vulnerable groups remain active participants in local economies.

Lack of post-project monitoring and learning systems limits the ability to track GRASP outcomes, impact, capture lessons, and sustain successful models for broader impact.

One of the key challenges after GRASP completion is the absence of a structured post-project monitoring and learning mechanism. Without continued tracking of SMEs and value chain actors, it becomes difficult to keep assessing outcomes, long-term impact, capture lessons, or support adaptive strategies for sustainability. This gap limits evidence-based policymaking and reduces opportunities for scaling successful models through government or private sector partnerships.

Economic volatility, political instability, terrorism and climate shocks threaten sustainability, especially for small producers and SMEs with limited resilience mechanisms.

External shocks such as economic instability, high inflation, political uncertainty, economic volatility, political instability, and climate shocks threaten the sustainability of GRASP value chain gains, especially for small producers and SMEs with limited resilience mechanisms. Political and climate-induced disasters pose significant risks to sustaining GRASP achievements. The horticulture and livestock value chains supported under GRASP remain highly vulnerable to market disruptions, extreme weather events, and fluctuating input costs. Such shocks can erode profitability, disrupt supply chains, and reduce the resilience of SMEs and producers who lack access to financial buffers, insurance mechanisms, or adaptive business models.

Established SMEs supported under the 4th cycle still lack durable, market-led linkages highlighting the need for stronger value chain partnerships, B2B mechanisms, and sustained private sector engagement.

While many SMEs supported under the 4th Matching Grant cycle were established enterprises, they continue to face challenges in developing durable, market-led linkages with private buyers, suppliers, and financial institutions. GRASP facilitation enabled them to introduce new technologies and value chain-related products; however, limited facilitation for access to trade finance, weak B2B mechanisms especially in view of product innovation and diversification, and fragmented supply chains may constrain long-term scalability. Future programs should prioritize institutionalizing value chain partnerships, strengthening BDS support, and fostering sustained private sector engagement.

11 Conclusion

The GRASP project demonstrates that inclusive rural economic transformation requires more than isolated technical or financial interventions; it requires strong institutional systems that can mobilize beneficiaries, align partners, assure quality, and track results with credibility. Within this framework, PPAF's role under GRASP was both foundational and strategic. By anchoring rural and business mobilization, leading access to finance, and stewarding the project's monitoring and evaluation architecture, PPAF provided the connective tissue that enabled diverse partners and interventions to function as a coherent programme.

PPAF's mobilization work-built project momentum and sustained engagement across highly challenging contexts, ensuring that SMEs and primary producers were not passive recipients, but active economic actors prepared to invest, adapt, and grow. Its access to finance interventions translated this readiness into capital flows, enabling enterprises to upgrade, formalize, and adopt climate-smart technologies despite macroeconomic headwinds. Meanwhile, its M&E and MIS leadership ensured that progress was systematically captured, verified, and reported, reinforcing accountability to the EU and strengthening evidence-based management throughout the project lifecycle.

Taken together, PPAF's contributions significantly enhanced the effectiveness, efficiency, and credibility of GRASP. They ensured that achievements reported were not only substantial in scale but also grounded in robust data and quality assurance processes. The systems, partnerships, and enterprise capacities built under PPAF's leadership will continue to yield dividends beyond the life of the project, positioning rural SMEs to access finance, markets, and institutional support in a sustained manner. As such, PPAF's GRASP component stands as a critical enabler of project success and a replicable model for managing complex, multi-partner rural development programmes at scale.

GRASP demonstrated that the most cost-effective and scalable implementation approach in resource-constrained settings is an integrated, SME centered value chain model that combines access to finance with capacity building, market exposure, and institutional collaboration, while leveraging existing local structures. Evidence shows that linking SMEs to formal financial institutions, complemented by matching grants, financial literacy, business planning, and mentoring, enabled enterprises to transition from informal to semi-formal operations, invest in value addition and technology, and generate income and employment more rapidly than farmers organizations platforms, and or policy heavy interventions. Targeting SMEs as anchor actors also created demand led "pull and push" effects across value chains, benefiting farmers, primary producers, input suppliers, and service providers without requiring large upfront investments in new organizations or policies.

Picture Gallery

Inauguration of the "Perfect Food Industries", Karachi

Orientation Session

Field Visit to TAY with EU and ITC team

Monitoring of 3rd cycle MG with ITC

SheTrade Session

Gender Coordination Meeting

A2F Orientation session

PPAF Islamabad Team attending the A2F session

MG utilization Survey

MG Tracking Survey through Mobile App

Visit to MG beneficiary

Three Days Training on BSO

4th Cycle Orientation Cycle for Kech

Cheque distribution ceremony

Cheque distribution cermony of Al Khair Carton Factory

MG 4 Cycle: Chaman Dry Fruit

livestock beneficiary

Pitch session of MG 4th cycle at Karachi

A2F Orientation Workshop

Meeting with Bank

Business Planning training

Cheque Distribution Ceremony

Visiting MG SME in Kech

MG SME Visiting at Lasbella

EU Delegation Field Visit

Utilization Tracking Survey

Sorting Machine – At a MG Beneficiary Site

Packing at Chamna Dry Fruit


PIRBHAT
MILK DAIRY
پربھات ملک ڈیری
Mob: 0303-3772601
Financial Literacy for 0.5M SMEs
2023 at GSF District Office Shaheed Benazir Abad / Sanghar
The Project
AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS (GRASP)
ar Foundation (GSF)


Annual Review
and
Planning Meeting