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Empowering Women Through Skills, Technology and Access to Finance in Balochistan







Women's economic empowerment requires the skills, resources and enabling environment needed to build sustainable livelihoods. To explore ways to advance women's socio-economic empowerment through education, technology, innovation and access to finance, PPAF organised a seminar at Governor House, Quetta, bringing together women entrepreneurs, policymakers and development partners.



The seminar was attended by Governor of Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, the Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, provincial ministers and advisers for Education and Women Development, and Dr Samia Raheel Qazi, MNA and National Coordinator, Dukhtaran-e-Pakistan, alongside representatives from academia, media and civil society. Discussions highlighted the need for stronger institutional collaboration, market linkages and financial inclusion, particularly for women in underserved areas.



Addressing the gathering, Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail emphasised that women's empowerment through education, financial independence and entrepreneurship is essential for Balochistan's socio-economic development. He appreciated PPAF and civil society's role in expanding opportunities through skills development and interest-free loans and called for greater efforts to reach underserved communities.



The event also celebrated women's achievements through the distribution of certificates to graduates of the PPAF-PTCL Ba-Ikhtiar Initiative, under which 300 women in Balochistan received training in traditional crafts and digital skills, with smartphones provided by PTCL to support online business activities. Interest free loan cheques were also distributed to women entrepreneurs, while stalls featuring products from over 12 women-led enterprises showcased their skills and entrepreneurial potential, highlighting PPAF's efforts to expand women's economic opportunities in Balochistan.



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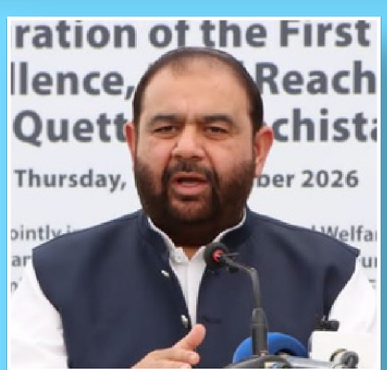
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Inauguration of Deaf Reach Centre of Excellence in Quetta



A significant step towards inclusive education in Balochistan was marked with the inauguration of the Deaf Reach Centre of Excellence in Quetta, expanding access to specialised education and skills development for children and young people with hearing impairments. Strengthened through a partnership between PPAF, Family Educational Services Foundation (FESF) and the Social Welfare Department, Government of Balochistan, the facility was jointly inaugurated by Mr Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, and Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Provincial Parliamentary Secretary for Social Welfare, in the presence of government representatives and civil society members.

The Centre has undergone renovations of classrooms and learning spaces and is equipped with furniture, learning supplies, IT equipment, appliances and a 30kW solar system, providing an improved learning environment for over 300 students with hearing impairments. It also offers free pick-and-drop transport for students, alongside dedicated teaching and administrative staff. To ensure quality instruction, the teaching staff underwent specialised training at FESF's Deaf Reach Centre in Karachi, the largest deaf education centre in Pakistan.









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Saffron Cultivation Takes Root in Haveli, AJK

The partnership between PPAF and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) Pakistan is progressing towards creating new livelihood opportunities for farming communities in Haveli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, through the introduction of saffron cultivation.

Under the project Strengthening Entrepreneurship for Livelihoods in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, implemented by Hamza Development Foundation (HDF), farmers, including women, from six villages across Union Councils Bassa and Kalamula are being supported to explore saffron as a high-value crop and potential source of income.

A two-day training equipped farmers with knowledge of saffron varieties, cultivation layouts, land preparation and sowing techniques. Practical field demonstrations helped participants apply their learning. Saffron corms and essential agricultural tools and equipment were also distributed among the participating farmers to support cultivation and subsequent crop management.

With land preparation and sowing underway, the initiative is taking practical steps towards diversifying local agricultural production and strengthening farmers' capacity to cultivate a high-value crop. By combining technical training with agricultural inputs and equipment, the partnership aims to lay the foundation for future value chain development and more sustainable livelihood opportunities in the region.







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Promoting Green Skills and Beekeeping Enterprises in Chakwal



Under the Sustainable Livelihoods through Green Skills Project in Rajian, District Chakwal, funded by Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) and PPAF and implemented by GBTI, an exposure visit to Tehsil Lawa in District Talagang was organised for prospective Common Interest Group (CIG) members interested in beekeeping.

The visit introduced participants to modern beekeeping techniques, honey production and the potential of apiculture as a sustainable livelihood. Participants received practical guidance on bee colony management, hive handling, honey harvesting, seasonal planning and safety protocols, with an emphasis on improving productivity and supporting colony health and survival.

As the project progresses, selected farmers will receive bee colonies, modern hives and protective kits to establish their own beekeeping enterprises. They will also be linked with Lawa's established beekeeping network, where experienced beekeepers coordinate the seasonal relocation of colonies in line with flowering patterns. This approach is expected to support colony health, improve honey yields and connect farmers with established markets, strengthening the potential for sustainable income generation.









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Strengthening Livestock Recovery and Resilience in Balochistan

The third Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the European Union-funded Post-Floods Livestock Support Project brought together representatives from the Government of Balochistan, the European Union in Pakistan, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Pakistan, PPAF and the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) to review implementation progress and define priorities for the next phase of livestock recovery and development.

The meeting assessed progress against the Year II work plan, examined operational challenges encountered during field implementation, and identified key priorities for the Year III work plan. These discussions enabled project partners to take stock of achievements, consider implementation gaps and strengthen coordination around the activities ahead.

The deliberations reinforced the importance of coordinated action among government institutions, development partners and implementing organisations to sustain recovery efforts, strengthen livestock-based livelihoods and advance the long-term resilience of rural communities across Balochistan.





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Promoting Social Cohesion Through Culture, Dialogue and Shared Values





PPAF supported two complementary initiatives in Quetta to promote social cohesion, national unity and respect for diversity, bringing together government representatives, academic institutions and communities.

Naqoosh-i-Watan: A National Cultural Narrative was organised in collaboration with the Balochistan Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (CoE-CVE), the Centre of Excellence on National Cohesion and Outreach under the National Heritage and Culture Division, Government of Pakistan, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), Quetta. The event highlighted Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage as a means of fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and stronger community connections.

Complementing this initiative, PPAF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety (MoPASS) and CoE-CVE Balochistan, convened an interactive dialogue on Promoting Peace, Pluralism and Interfaith Harmony under the theme "One Pakistan – Our Shared Identity, Our Shared Responsibility." Representatives of diverse faiths exchanged perspectives on tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and inclusion, emphasising the role of constructive dialogue in bridging differences.

Together, the initiatives highlighted the importance of celebrating cultural diversity and fostering interfaith understanding to build a peaceful, inclusive and cohesive society.









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Strategic Communication Training for PPAF and Its Partners





As part of its continued investment in institutional capacity building, PPAF engaged the Center for Communication Programs Pakistan (CCPP) to deliver a seven-workshop training series under the Excellence in Strategic Communication Programme. The initiative aimed to strengthen the communication capabilities of PPAF staff and partner organisations, enabling them to communicate development initiatives and results more strategically and effectively.



The series engaged 163 participants, comprising 51 PPAF staff and 112 representatives of partner organisations from across Pakistan, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. It began with two customised three-day workshops for PPAF staff in Islamabad, tailored to the organisation's communication priorities, followed by five workshops for partner organisations in Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Karachi and Quetta.



The programme covered key elements of strategic communication, including situational analysis, objectives, audience identification, messaging, communication channels, partnerships and performance measurement. Through storytelling, group work, practical exercises and the Communication Lab, participants applied these concepts to real-world challenges and developed communication strategies aligned with their organisational goals. While the core curriculum remained consistent, its application was adapted to the needs and contexts of each participating group.



The series concluded in Quetta with 18 participants from across Balochistan, reinforcing the role of communication as a strategic function for stakeholder engagement and effective communication of results.

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Stories from the Field

Bringing Safe Drinking Water Closer to Home

For decades, residents of Sabir Abad in District Tank struggled to access safe drinking water, relying largely on the seasonal Tank Zam stream. Water was often muddy and contaminated, scarcity intensified during dry spells, and rainfall further compromised its quality. Families faced the risk of waterborne diseases, while women and children spent hours collecting water from distant sources.

Through the participatory planning process under the Livelihood Support and Promotion of Small Community Infrastructure Programme (LACIP-II), funded by KfW, led by PPAF and implemented by the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), the community identified safe drinking water as its foremost priority. In response, a solar-powered Drinking Water Supply Scheme was established to provide a reliable and sustainable source of potable water to the community. The scheme comprises a borehole, pump room, overhead storage tank, distribution network and public collection points. Powered by solar energy, the system reduces dependence on conventional electricity and supports a more climate-resilient water supply.

Today, the scheme serves 1,890 people, bringing clean drinking water closer to their homes. Reduced reliance on untreated surface water helps limit exposure to waterborne diseases, while less time spent collecting water gives women and children more opportunities to pursue education, childcare and productive activities. Community ownership further supports the facility's operation and maintenance.

For Sabir Abad, access to safe drinking water represents more than improved infrastructure; it is a step towards healthier households, reduced daily hardships and a better quality of life.







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Stories from the Field

Kousar's Journey to a Growing Business

Kousar Parveen, a 50-year-old woman from Qaboola in district Pakpattan, started a small grocery shop at her home in 2013 to support her family. Her husband worked as a daily-wage labourer, but his irregular income made it difficult to meet household expenses.

To strengthen her business and improve her family's financial stability, Kousar needed access to financial resources. In 2024, with the support of the PPAF led Prime Minister's Interest Free Loan Programme, she received her first interest free loan of PKR 50,000 through PPAF's implementing partner, Agahe Pakistan. This financial assistance enabled her to purchase additional stock, expand her product range, and strengthen her grocery business.

Building on this support, Kousar continued to grow her business through subsequent interest free loans and has now reached her fourth loan cycle. With her latest interest free loan of PKR 95,000, she further expanded her shop by adding clothing, children's school uniforms, and shoes. What began as a small home-based grocery shop has now become one of the best-stocked shops in her village.

With the help of interest-free financing and her continued efforts, Kousar's monthly income has increased from PKR 15,000–20,000 to approximately PKR 40,000–45,000. She is now better able to manage household expenses, support her son's education, and save for his wedding.

Kousar expresses her gratitude, saying, "With the support of PPAF and Agahe Pakistan, I have been able to grow my business, increase my income and provide greater financial security for my family. Seeing my shop grow gives me confidence and hope for my son's future to see my business growing and grateful for the opportunity to build a better future for my family."



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Stories from the Field

Making Healthcare Safer and More Accessible in Thatta

In Union Council Ghaoa, District Thatta, a Basic Health Unit (BHU) serves more than 30 surrounding villages, providing round-the-clock medical services to over 200 patients daily, including women, children and older people. However, inadequate waiting space and seating left patients exposed to extreme heat and rain. Frequent power outages disrupted essential services, with deliveries sometimes conducted using mobile phone lights, while rainwater accumulating in the courtyard created additional difficulties for patients and staff.

Through the PPAF's Restoration of Social Services Project, the Sindh Community Foundation (SCF), worked with local Community Organisations, particularly women's groups, to identify and address these challenges. Consultations with the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) and the District Health Department informed practical, climate-friendly improvements to the facility.

These included an eco-friendly, low-carbon waiting area accommodating up to 200 people, an expanded solar power system to support the maternity and labour rooms, trenches for rainwater management, plantation to improve the surrounding environment, and a gender-sensitive toilet facility for patients and visitors.

The improvements have made the BHU a more accessible and dignified space, particularly for women and vulnerable patients. Zahida, a local community member, shared that she now feels more comfortable and respected while waiting for healthcare services. The shaded waiting area is also serving wider community needs, with government stakeholders, including polio teams, using it to brief staff on their activities.

The Ghaoa BHU demonstrates how community-led planning and climate-friendly solutions can strengthen healthcare services, improve patient experiences and create safer, more inclusive and resilient facilities.





