

Media Update

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ITC

PRESS RELEASE

Analyzing Government Response to the COVID-19

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

Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress project (GRASP), funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC), organized the webinar with Sustainable Development Policy Institute to share findings of The research on regulatory and institutional response of Sindh and Balochistan during Covid-19, with key stakeholders and policy makers.

The event brought together key influencers and policy makers, who participated in a meaningful debate on the institutional, regulatory, and government response in the wake of pandemic, and how the rural economy could be assisted to recover from its adverse effects.

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

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

Robert Skidmore, Chief of Sector and Enterprise Development at the International Trade Centre in Geneva said, "Increasing connectivity, improving primary data collection in rural areas, fine-tuning communication and coordination between all stakeholders in the field and addressing the differential impacts on women were some of the areas that both the public and private sectors can focus on together".

GRASP has been adapted in response to the pandemic, and a Covid-19 emergency response work plan is being implemented. Through impact surveys, awareness campaigns, and policy dialogues the project has been working to improve MSME's in Sindh and Balochistan. GRASP Coordinator Azher Ali Choudry thanked the government officials and private sector representatives for their inputs, and concluded the event by stating, "Financing needs of the agriculture sector need to be assessed and expedited, and GRASP will continue its work to uplift small and medium enterprise in Sindh and Balochistan through work on the ground, and policy recommendations.