

Media Update

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ITC

PRESS RELEASE

Grants distributed to agri-based SMEs in Sindh

A matching grant distribution ceremony for the agri-based SMEs was held in Karachi on November 30, 2021, by Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP), a European Union-funded project designed to uplift business potential of the horticulture and livestock SMEs in Sindh and Balochistan. GRASP is implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC), which globally contributes to uplifting SMEs through gender mainstreaming, policy shift, access to finance, networking, capacity building and product improvement programs.

GRASP provided matching grant of around Rs. 18 million under its emergency response plan to 12 SMEs from Karachi, Thatta and Khairpur. The size of grant varies from Rs. 0.4 to Rs. 3 million based on the business plans shared by the SMEs and evaluation carried out by GRASP. The selected SMEs represent an economic mix of micro, small and medium enterprises, with the amount disbursed in one or two tranches, discussed, and agreed in their work plan.

Ms. Shabnam Baloch, Provincial Lead GRASP, highlighting significance of the GRASP matching grants, said the scheme was initiated to mitigate the impacts triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic on the livestock and horticulture SMEs. That plan comprised of training, seed delivery and cash grants distribution based on the surveys of the SMEs. KPMG and ITC, with the facilitation of People Poverty Reduction Program (PPRP), Government program being implemented by Sindh Rural Support Program (SRSO), jointly identified the most deserving businesses to distribute grants to, more than 50% of which are led by women entrepreneurs.

Syed Ahson Ali Shah, Partner KPMG-ESG, CCSR said that the matching grants would support date processing units, drip irrigation, solar tube-wells, shed construction, tunnel farming, nursery establishing, livestock rearing etc.

Shortlisting of the grantees included partnership with the UN agencies including UN-ITC, World Food Program, and FAO through leveraging upon their organizational resources to support the beneficiaries. Moreover, preference was given to progressive businesses who has shown innovative, smart, and competitive proposals. Matching grant support from GRASP will take further inputs of the other projects by Government and other development agencies.

CEO SRSO, Mr. Dittal Kalhoro said his organization has connected a huge range of agri-based men and women entrepreneurs to the financial institutions and market; this matching grant will further enhance their capacity to take those entrepreneurs to the next level of businesses in the market.

Dr. Shirin Narejo, Technical Coordinator Sindh Rural Support Program SRSO) distributed cheques among the matching grants beneficiaries of the village organizations (mostly women-led) from Thatta, Mirpur Sakro, Khairpur Mirs and Karachi. Public private partnerships such as this will focus on economic empowerment of women, by providing support around environment-friendly horticulture and livestock practices. Dr. Narejo added that handholding via matching grants in particular of the women-led organization will improve value addition, productivity and climate-resilience green technologies for the SMEs, strengthen their profiles and lead them ahead through the trade-related capacity building opportunities to increase market linkages.

GRASP has set a milestone with the completion of this activity, in line with its mandate of increasing competitiveness of the private sector SMEs through inculcating the good agriculture and manufacturing practices, innovation, climate smart technologies, value addition and marketing, being demonstrated by all the shortlisted SMEs.
