

# Media Update

6 June 2022

## IFAD

PRESS RELEASE

### Secure land tenure a landmark step for agricultural transformation in Gilgit-Baltistan with IFAD assistance

6 June 2022 – Skardu - Here today in Skardu, for the first time in the recent past of Gilgit-Baltistan, secure land tenure titles were given for 322 possessions to the households of village Kharfaq, District Ghanche, Baltistan. The women headed households also benefited and received the land titles.

The chief guest Mr. Shuja Alam, Commissioner Baltistan Division and IFAD Country Director Pakistan, Hubert Boirard awarded the land tenure titles to household from the village at the regional office of Economic Transformation Initiative, Gilgit-Baltistan (ETI-GB) at Skardu. Under the project secure land titles will be provided to around 30 000 household for a total of 50 000 acres, thanks to the historical policy reforms introduced by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan with the assistance of IFAD. At the occasion were also present, Mr. Muhammad Raza, Deputy Commission, Ghanche; Mr. Zakir Hussain, Additional Secretary, Tourism Department, GB; Mr. Nasrullah, Deputy Director, Water Management Department, Ghanche; Mr. Muahmmad Naseem, Deputy Chief Planning, Planning and Development Department, GoGB; Mr. Sadaqat Hussain, Regional Programme Manager, AKRSP; Mr. Fida Muhammad, Country Programme Officer, IFAD; Ms. Sumaira, Country Programme Analyst, IFAD and staff of the regional coordination unit, ETIGB.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Hubert Boirard, Country Director, IFAD highlighted the exceptional achievements obtained under the ETI-GB programme in terms an new irrigated land developed (42 000 acres already),

Farm to market roads (381 km) and professional farm organization supported (223). He attributed the success of ETI-GB to the multiple innovative ways to implement this programme and in particular the community lead approach, the excellent collaboration between line department, government of GB, implementing partners and ETI-GB project management unit. This land titling distribution will initiate a new dynamic in agriculture. By doubling the surface of the farm of around 30 % of the rural population, the income and food security at farm level will be now and for the future guarantee.

At the occasion, Mr. Shuja Alam, Commission Baltistan expressed his sincere gratitude to the IFAD for its assistance and stressed for continuation of this successful project in the remaining districts of GB. He also congratulated the households for receiving the land titles and urged them to continue their hard work for cultivating the land to ensure their food security and prosperity.

ETIGB is a 7 year initiative co-financed by Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The USD 120 million investment project is implemented in the overall province of Gilgit-Balistan and focus on new irrigation and land development, farm to market roads and professional business oriented farmers' organisation development. Cultivated land being the most important resource for the rural households regarding food security and livelihoods has been fragmenting over time with the increasing population. The average landholding in the focused districts was 0.6 acre per household as a baseline situation, which represented an unviable economic unit of farming thus compelling outmigration in most cases. With the intervention of ETI-GB the average landing holding for the 1/3rd of rural population has been more than doubled offering an opportunity to improve livelihoods and food security.

Secure land title have been a complex challenge. For the last 36 years (since 1986), land titling has remained pending in unsettled areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. This has been, among others, a key constraint for the population regarding investment in land development, agribusiness and most importantly inability to present it as a collateral for access to formal finance. Secure land titling was one of the policy reform agenda under the ETIGB to facilitate economic transformation processes.

The Policy of Secure Land Tenure, particularly covering the 50,000 acres to be brought under irrigation and cultivation under IFAD assisted ETIGB in District; Ghizer, Ghanche, Astore and Diamer was approved by the Cabinet of Gilgit-Baltistan in its 16th Meeting held on 14th February, 2022. The Senior Member Board of Revenue, Gilgit-Baltistan (SMBR GB) notified the policy titled “Policy for giving possession of lands developed by Economic Transformation Initiative (ETI-GB) to the beneficiary households”. This landmark policy reform will go a long way building the dynamics of economic transformation in Gilgit-Baltistan.