



Policy Brief

Based on Participatory Action Research Dynamics of Household Poverty and Inclusive Development in Balochistan with a Focus on Women's Empowerment Under European Union (EU) Funded, BRACE Programme

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty reduction has always been challenging for policy makers particularly in communities like that of Balochistan where the likelihood of poverty pushing factors are higher than that of the pulling factors. It is also challenging for the reason that poverty has become a multidimensional phenomenon which needs to be handled through holistic and integrated approaches. Some of the poverty imperatives are tangible while others are intangible. In most of the policy making endeavours for poverty reduction, only tangible factors are taken into consideration ignoring the fact that intangibles are also badly affecting the welfare level of masses.

Generally, policies related to poverty reduction are formulated on the basis of

review of literature and best practices being employed in the world. The grass root realities and indigenous factors are ignored either consciously or unconsciously. Policy makers thus fail to find and focus the target. This policy gap calls for the importance of primary data based studies which are necessarily to be conducted required to arrive at some workable policy lessons.

This policy brief has exclusively been prepared by following a mixed method approach in which the state of welfare of communities in Balochistan has been deeply examined at the primary level. The condition, grievances and voices of all stakeholders have been assessed to find out the policy gaps not only in the very formulation purposes but allied implementation plan of each policy narrative.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

1. Dynamics of Household Poverty in Balochistan

Unemployment, high dependency ratio, higher inflation, illiteracy and lack of employable skills, health shocks, loans for social and economic reasons, are the main poverty push factors across all the three districts. Natural disasters like droughts and floods lead to poverty as well. Lack of water/irrigation infrastructure, insufficiently resourced staff in government extension departments leads to agricultural losses and hence contributing to poverty.

In terms of likelihood or probability of events to push a household in to poverty, natural disasters (droughts, lack of water for agriculture use, earthquakes, etc.) have 50% likelihood to be a poverty push factor. Death shocks and illiteracy are likely to be poverty push events, with a probability of 29% & 23%, respectively. There is a 22.5% chance that the household will fall into poverty due to un-employment as well as lesser income.

Human resource development/skill training, income generation from livestock, decreased dependency ratio, availability of water for

agricultural production are the main pull factors. Similarly, social safety net (as mentioned by 4% of the respondents) provided by the government is another pull factor. Decrease in dependency ratio and increase in income from livestock have a likelihood of 17% to be poverty pull factor. Social safety net provided by the government has 14% probability to be a poverty pull event. Literacy and education have a likelihood of 9.3% for being a poverty pull determinant.

2. Women Empowerment

Women's role within households is concentrated on handling of chores like cooking, cleaning, child rearing, providing care of elderly people, etc. in both Pashtun and Baloch areas. Only a few women are involved in mobility outside home for some household chores like livestock feeding, etc. in Baloch areas.

Lack of women's awareness about their importance, illiteracy, inaccessibility and non-availability of information sources, lack of access to markets, capital and patriarchal cultural pattern are key contributors to disempowerment of women.

Women's education, literacy, skill training, social organisation and mobilisation can impart women empowerment. Women's empowerment and participation in household level economic activities can lead to poverty reduction. Organised and empowered women can influence government service delivery based on their awareness and mobilisation.

3. Inclusive Development, Social Mobilisation and Structural Changes in the Governance

There is a lack of understanding about inclusive development and local governance among district level government officials. Generally, the policy and development programme design are being done through a top down approach. Government needs to introduce consistent, conducive and inclusive policies for rural development, education, health, employment, agriculture, livestock, mining etc.

Bottom up governance arrangements coupled with indigenous engagement of citizens and their organisations for the provision of rural development, education, health and employment opportunities, etc., are the keys to improve local governance and inclusive development.

Local governance system needs to be placed and improved across the Balochistan province. Local bodies need to be capacitated in terms of the awareness and skills of local body representatives

in the areas of financial management, development scheme design, monitoring, social mobilisation and joint civic action, etc. Institutional capacity of local government bodies in terms of facilities, services, office equipment and resources is required to support the overall effective management of local governance initiatives, etc.

Social mobilisation can bridge the gap between communities and local government institutions and this can be used as a lever for improving the government service delivery. Social mobilisation can empower communities to get involved in the local development initiatives vis-à-vis local government officials, e.g. by involving them in preparation/ updation of Village Development Plans and Union Council Development Plans.

Social mobilisation can empower women at all levels. Social mobilisation has the potential to eradicate the stigmatic connotations found in the local social and culture fabric for participation of women in various economic and socialisation related events.

The government has to ensure that suitable policy frameworks are in place to provide public services as per its mandate. The communities have to be mobilised and organised to more actively engage with government. On such engagement can contribute to sustainable poverty reduction and women's empowerment in the province.



Figure 1: Proposed Areas of Policy Focus

THE POLICY FOCUS

According to Joseph Stiglitz, development is about transforming the lives of people and just not transforming the economy. Joseph Stiglitz in “Making Globalization Work”, (2006), argues that “Development is about transforming the lives of people, not just transforming economies”. The findings of the study about Balochistan clearly denote that transforming the lives of individuals, households and communities is the key to sustainable development in the province. Inclusive development-based policy focus and bottom up approach for policy design are the fundamental pillars for initiating sustainable growth across the socio-economic facets of Balochistan province. However, inclusive policy-based sector development programmes are required as well for rural development, health,

education, skill development, agriculture, livestock, mining, etc., sectors.

Bottom up approach based on inclusive policy design equally needs an improved system of local governance. Therefore, the system of local governance should be accessible for all the segments of society, so that equitable service delivery can be ensured. Similarly, community participation through bottom up approaches and methods for improved local governance need to be strengthened. Social mobilisation needs to be included as a fundamental lever for enabling all groups of people to participate in the socio-economic change process right away from design of provision of public services to their monitoring.

THE POLICY DIRECTION & OPTIONS

Through the above given policy focus the undermentioned policy areas shall be prioritised for embarking upon the journey of continued development and inclusive growth in Balochistan province.



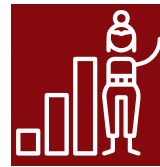
1. Poverty Reduction

Human development through inclusive education and skill development will unlock the path to prosperity. Education policy of the province should assign due priority to all-inclusive adult literacy, skill development, and formal and non-formal education. Priority assigned to education and literacy in policy, planning, resource allocation and implementation, etc., will initiate the process of value-added human capital development. Capable human capital will be able to employ itself to ensure its contribution to the economic output of the household and overall economy of the province. Thus, leading to poverty reduction. Improved women participation rate (as a result of inclusive literacy and skill development programmes and access to capital) in non-formal and formal employment will be another advantage for alleviating poverty at household level.

Effective social protection system is another most important pillar. Social protection should be inclusive so that no deserving household is excluded. Also, social protection for the abled should have a different approach from that for the disabled. The former should be designed in a manner that the abled are supported to become productive and improve their own conditions, over a given time framework. The disabled should, of course, continue to be supported so that their basic needs are met.

Economic growth of the province needs a consistent priority and policy focus. Consistent policies for developing major sectors of economy of Balochistan, i.e. agriculture, livestock, mining etc. while providing adequate investments in overall infrastructure is the key to inclusive growth. Major infrastructure investments areas include roads, dams (small and large both), markets and value chains, digital connectivity etc. These sectoral development initiatives can ensure provision of equitable services for rural

development, education, health, employment, skill development, women development, agriculture and livestock development, etc.



2. Women Empowerment and Social Development

Besides women's education, literacy and skill development, social development of women needs attention through progressive social action and inclusive policies. Social mobilisation should be one of the main pillars for bringing in the desirable social change in the status and perception of women in the eyes of men, tribal leaders and influencers. Social mobilisation should become the centrepiece of all the development initiatives of the government to empower all groups of people and support inclusive growth.

Enhanced women participation through social cohesion and association will address the challenges of women mobility, self-awareness, access to markets, capital and overall inclusion of women in various spheres of development. Already there are emerging cases of this happening.



3. Governance and Related Structural Changes

Improved governance and result focused functioning of service delivery departments of the government lay down a foundation for design and implementation of effective policies for inclusive development. Continual improvement of local government system is the key to this process. Capacity of local representatives along with a bottom up approach to policy and development programme design and implementation will benefit the masses at all levels and in each sector, i.e. rural development, education, skill development, agriculture, livestock, mining, climate, environment, etc.

Participatory and inclusive approach in policy and development programme design is necessitated by the overall challenges being faced by the province. This kind of approach will lead all the stakeholders to ascertain the under-functioning governance structure and joint action will be facilitated to remove the governance bottlenecks. The participation of

masses will be harnessed through the support of community institutions and their engagement with local authorities. Forums for fostering and strengthening citizen-government engagement along the pattern of Joint District Development Committees (JDDCs) needs to be formalised under a suitable policy framework.

Performance management of the government institutions (i.e. in the areas of planning, monitoring, evaluation, resource allocation, human resource management, interdepartmental coordination, setting up key performance indicators for every area(s) of governance and public service delivery), will help in flawless implementation of inclusive growth policies across the sectors.

SUMMATIVE IMPACT OF POLICY DIRECTION & OPTIONS

The areas of poverty reduction, social development, inclusive growth and governance are highly integrated, and one complements the other. Improved governance and fiscal management set the stage for inclusive development. Governance improvement has two clear dimensions, i.e. effective policy, resources and planning as well as efficient human resources and procedures. Therefore, structural changes in the governance model backed by capable human resource can support the sustainable inclusive development. All these governance arrangements will effectively address the human resource development and employment challenges faced by the province.

Growth in all the critical sectors of economy, i.e. is agriculture, livestock, mining, market development, etc., is the key to prosperity.

Infrastructure development is yet another contributor to the inclusive growth. All these developments and governance changes will lead to poverty reduction on a sustainable basis. In the process human capital development, sectoral growth across various sectors of the economy, employment generation and women participation in the household economy and informal workforce will be the key levers for bringing in inclusive as well as sustainable development. Since social mobilisation will take a centre stage therefore, capacity and demand side of equation for inclusive development will raise the bar. Simultaneously, supply side parameters of effective public service delivery and inclusive growth based sectoral development will be able to sustain the pace of development.

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