

GIZ: Gender Competition 2024

Rural Women of Pakistan Embrace Innovative Agriculture Practices to Combat Climate Change

Background

The 2022 floods in Pakistan caused over 1730 deaths and affected over 33 million people, half of them children. Livestock losses amounted to over 13 million. In Sindh alone, crop losses due to floods equalled PKR 364 billion. More than 2.1 million homes were lost, and over 7.5 million people needed humanitarian assistance.

The climate crisis in Pakistan has swiftly exacerbated existing disparities, disproportionately affecting communities at the peripheries, especially women, who face unique challenges to their well-being and economic stability. Discriminatory power dynamics further marginalise them, hindering their participation in decision-making processes related to climate action. Pakistani women, particularly those below the poverty line, are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to a complex intersection of factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, class, religion, location, education, and income. It is crucial to recognise that addressing climate change, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction for all depends on the leadership of women and girls.

Entrenched gender inequalities, rooted in patriarchy, limit women's participation in climate resilience efforts in Pakistan. This exclusion overlooks unique perspectives, particularly from women based in rural areas, thereby hindering effective climate initiatives.

Recognising and amplifying the vital role of women, especially those from indigenous backgrounds, is imperative for crafting and implementing successful climate adaptation strategies. Breaking the cycle of exclusion through policy changes and awareness is crucial for building inclusive and effective climate resilience. Hence, increasing the agency of women and marginalised groups becomes central to addressing the challenges posed by climate change. This involves dismantling systemic barriers that restrict access to resources, technology, and opportunities. By fostering intersectional values and gender equity, Pakistan can enhance its capacity to respond to the climate crisis and promote sustainable development that benefits all segments of society.

The measure in focus pertains to the establishment of climate-smart food production gardens led by women farmers in the conservative communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab. This measure is being executed by Strengthening Climate Adaptation and Resilience (SAR) in collaboration with its local partner, LASOONA, as an integral component of our broader project, 'Changing Minds for Climate Resilience through Awareness Raising and Local Capacity Measures.' This measure was chosen due to its alignment with our commitment to promote gender equality and incorporate feminist core principles in our work. The measure is a multifaceted initiative and designed to address the impact of climate change and improve livelihoods of vulnerable populations, especially women in Punjab and KP, Pakistan.

The measure encompasses three major components: vegetable cultivation, fruit plants, and hen farming. Through this measure, the project established 40 food production gardens in Punjab & KP (20 in each province) i.e. 10 in district Rajanpur and 10 in Rahim Yar Khan (RYK) (Punjab), similarly 10 in Swat and 10 in Lower Dir (KP). The chosen districts are undergoing adverse effects

of climate change, including erratic weather patterns, floods, water scarcity, and extreme temperatures. These factors have disrupted traditional agricultural practices, leading to reduced crop yields and food insecurity.

The newly established gardens are being managed by women farmers, to improve their livelihoods and enhance food security. By diversifying food production and promoting sustainable agriculture practices, this measure mitigates the impact of climate change on local women communities while ensuring long-term food sustainability and immediate livelihood improvement of vulnerable communities and addressing the discrimination and unequal access to productive resources (such as land and in kind assistance); unequal access to finance, and knowledge; discriminatory social, cultural, and legal norms and practices; and capacity gaps for these women (e.g. on Climate Smart Agriculture).

The state of women's and girls' nutrition and food security in the targeted districts of KP and Punjab, is fraught, with several formidable challenges. Firstly, malnutrition prevails among many women and girls, leaving them lacking the essential nutrients vital for their overall well-being. In addition to this, deficiencies in key nutrients such as Vitamin A and zinc are widespread, profoundly impacting the health and development of these individuals. Compounding these issues is a general lack of nutrition knowledge, making it difficult for women and girls to make informed dietary choices. Furthermore, adolescent girls often grapple with a knowledge gap in Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), which directly affects their overall health. Limited access to nutritious and diverse food options further exacerbates the situation, as women and girls encounter barriers in obtaining the nourishment they require. Expectant mothers and those in the lactation phase often lack the necessary dietary knowledge and access to optimal nutrition, hindering their well-being and that of their infants. Lastly, negative behaviours within their influence group, such as husbands, mothers-in-law, and fathers-in-law, can perpetuate these challenges, making it even more essential to address these multifaceted issues to improve the nutrition and food security of women and girls in these areas.

The measure employee instrumental approach to ensure robust women's participation, exemplified by the engagement of women trainers. This strategy seeks to empower women farmers to cultivate vegetables for household consumption, thereby generating monthly savings that can be redirected toward other essential household expenses.

Championing Feminist Principles for Gender Equality

Gender inequality intensifies the scourges of food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty. Agricultural strategies frequently neglect rural communities, especially women, and can intensify rather than alleviate inequality. To combat systemic discrimination, the initiative challenges the existing status quo, providing essential training, seed supplies, and related inputs to ensure that the women involved are not at a structural disadvantage. The mission is clear: to confront and dismantle the barriers that rural women relentlessly face in accessing resources. The establishment of women-led food production gardens is not just a step; it is a seismic shift towards dismantling gender inequality and unleashing the power of women. Beyond securing food for women, this initiative inherently questions traditional gender roles, aiming to put women into leadership roles that defy norms. By bringing women into the forefront of agriculture, it strikes at the heart of inequality, fostering community involvement and economic independence. This work underscores that encouraging women's participation in agriculture contributes to a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous society.

Results and Impact Matrix			
	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Food security	Immediate access to diversified and nutritious food	Improved women community resilience to food shortages	Sustainable source of nutrition, reducing dependence on external source
Economic benefits	Saving expenditures of buying vegetables and eggs from market	Women can have some savings of their own	Reduced healthcare costs
Environment impact	Reduced carbon footprint	Soil regeneration and biodiversity improvement	Preserving ecosystems and natural resources
Community building	Improved social cohesion	Strengthening community ties and mutual support	Established culture of collaboration and shared responsibilities
Health and wellness	Immediate access to fresh, nutritious food	Improved overall household health and reduction of healthcare costs	Healthier lifestyles and disease prevention

Gender Equity as a Foundational Aspect of the Work

The establishment of women-led, climate-resilient food production gardens signifies a significant milestone, not only for ensuring food security but also as a powerful catalyst for promoting gender equality. The women who are recipients of this initiative embody social empowerment, environmental awareness, and sustainable development within their communities. These women are not merely passive recipients; they are proactive changemakers, utilising innovative and climate-smart techniques to address the challenges posed by climate crises in Pakistan.

In their leadership roles, these women pioneer diverse and adaptive methods, including water-efficient irrigation, crop diversification, and soil conservation, resiliently facing the unpredictable impacts of changing weather patterns.

The strength of this initiative lies in its collaborative approach. Partnerships with various stakeholders, ranging from local communities to provincial departments of agriculture and livestock in Punjab and KP, underscore the acknowledgment of gender equity as a fundamental and non-negotiable aspect of this work. Through these collaborations, the initiative ensures that gender inclusivity is not just recognised but actively promoted, making it a feminist endeavour committed to dismantling traditional norms and fostering a more equitable and sustainable future.

Implementing Feminist Core Principles

The measure contributes to the implementation of BMZ's Feminist Development Policy by promoting equal access to climate adaptation and risk management for all genders, and creates awareness for the structural, gender-related vulnerabilities of individuals against climate risks. The measure challenges the male-oriented and male-privileged systems in the more conservative societies of Pakistan such as Rahim Yar Khan in Punjab and Lower Dir in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to achieve gender equality. The trainings have been designed considering the diverse needs of

individuals and developed based on their different needs and values, thus enabling them to learn flexible and diverse technologies, empowering their decision-making power in vegetable crop production.

By supporting gender-transformative approaches within local communities and strengthening the feminist-climate nexus in Pakistan, this measure aims to pave the way for gender-sensitive approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation. Simultaneously, it enhances capacity in the collection, synthesis, and dissemination of knowledge and data at the intersection of gender equality and the environment. Its focus is on centring the lived experiences of climate change and responses to it, with the goal of strengthening women's rights and decision-making processes at the grassroots level.

The measure aims for rural women to be both visible and meaningfully engaged in climate decision-making and implementation processes. This commitment ensures that the voices and priorities of frontline women and the most vulnerable communities are not only heard but also reflected across levels of decision-making. The measure actively pursues their inclusion to guarantee that their perspectives shape the direction of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The measure also bears in mind positive masculinities by engaging individuals of all genders in project activities such as Farmer Field School, ensuring that the trainings are led by trainers of all genders. The measure aims to ensure that women in RYK acquire land ownership from their in-laws after getting awareness, food security, and capacity building. The resources provided include capacity building, trainings, and inputs. The measure also aims to establish women community-based organisations to ensure equal representation of all genders in decision-making processes.

This transformative initiative, rooted in feminist principles, is empowering women through the three pivotal Rs: **Rights**, **Resources**, and **Representation**. Recognising the significance of **Rights**, women in Rahim Yar Khan say that they are gaining autonomy over their economic future; for instance, the woman who has acquired land ownership from her in-laws. Such landmark shifts are a result of targeted awareness that enlightens women about their legal entitlements, fostering an environment where their property rights are acknowledged and respected. Simultaneously, the focus on **Resources** involves strategic capacity building, training programs and inputs. Women are equipped with the skills and knowledge essential for sustainable agriculture practices, ensuring food security for themselves and their families.

By addressing the critical aspect of **Representation**, the measure facilitated the establishment of women-centric Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). These organisations become platforms where women collectively advocate for their needs, exchange experiences, and influence decision-making processes. Through this holistic approach, the measure exemplifies how feminist principles can catalyse positive change across Pakistan, not only advancing women's rights but also enhancing their access to resources and ensuring their meaningful representation in community development initiatives.

Participatory Collaboration

In advancing gender equality, feminist values, and BMZ's Feminist Development Policy, collaboration played an integral role. SAR closely collaborated with project partners, colleagues, and provincial government departments, including the Departments of Agriculture in KP and

Punjab, as well as the Livestock Departments in KP and Punjab. Overcoming challenges such as navigating cultural nuances, resource limitations, and resistance to change was achieved through the establishment of community-based organisations in the targeted districts.

Key success factors encompassed strategic partnerships with local organisations like LASOONA, rooted deeply in community-based work, grassroots engagement through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and adaptable approaches such as involving women trainers. These efforts resulted in the creation of impactful women-led food production gardens. The measure successfully empowered women through skill-building, fostered community collaboration for shared decision-making, and ensured equitable access to resources and opportunities.

These initiatives were designed to dismantle gender-based barriers, promote inclusivity, and establish sustainable, empowering environments for women in agriculture within the conservative communities of KP and Punjab. All these efforts were guided by a commitment to maintaining a feminist ethos throughout the implementation of the measure.

Stories of Resilience.... voices from the field

.... From KP

In the Lower Dir District of KP, many success stories unfold, showcasing women taking charge of their households through innovative vegetable cultivation. Despite the region's conservative environment, these women have embraced unconventional agricultural methods, transforming their homes into self-sufficient havens. By cultivating a variety of vegetables, they not only ensure a steady supply of nutritious food for their families but also challenge societal norms.

This transformative impact extends beyond individual households, stimulating a positive change. Through their dedication, these women have sown the seeds of empowerment, fostering diversified and healthy diets for their families. Moreover, their efforts are contributing to a constructive shift in cultural perceptions regarding women's roles in traditionally conservative communities.

Roheena, a 45-year-old resident of Tori Gati village in Lower Dir district, KP, was among several hundred families grappling with the daily challenge of meeting their basic needs. Roheena and her husband, Shahzaman, struggled to make ends meet with the meagre income Shahzaman earned from daily farming in an area highly susceptible to climate change. Despite these hardships, Roheena decisively broke her family's long-standing cycle of poverty and food insecurity. With unwavering tenacity and determination, she seized an opportunity that arose, bringing an end to years of struggle.

With support from BMZ/GIZ, a local woman in Tori Gati village, District Lower Dir, successfully established her own kitchen garden after learning Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) techniques. Overcoming challenges such as the unavailability of quality seeds and irrigation water, she acquired the skills to grow diversified vegetables at home, accomplishing a task she initially deemed nearly impossible.

The assistance provided enabled her to cultivate as many as eight varieties of vegetables in her kitchen garden. This not only allows her to prepare fresh vegetables for her family daily but also helps her save approximately 1500 – 2000 PKR (05 – 06 Euros) per week, contributing to her family's financial sustainability.

Furthermore, the provision of a climate-resilient chicken coop, along with chickens, is expected to bring about a positive shift in her family's lifestyle. This addition will not only provide nutrient-rich eggs but also contribute to the reduction of the family's ecological footprint.

... From Punjab:

The measure greatly assisted a widowed woman in the remote Union Council of Rahim Yar Khan district, Punjab, who faced a pressing issue related to the lack of land ownership. This obstacle had been hindering her ability to receive assistance for eight years following her husband's passing, imposed by her in-laws. A turning point in her life occurred when a Community-Based Organisation (CBO), founded by a SAR partner, started raising awareness about the importance of land ownership and establishing a food production garden.

Empowered with newfound knowledge and determination, the woman embarked on a journey to change her family's destiny. She began by persuading her in-laws and elders to support her in obtaining land ownership. With the guidance of the CBO, she successfully navigated the complicated legal system, which often proved daunting for women in her community. Her perseverance paid off when she acquired a piece of land in her name. With this newfound ownership, she established her own food production garden and received agricultural support/inputs, leading to a 20 Euro increase in her family's monthly income.

Cultivating the land with the skills she acquired, she grew crops and vegetables for her family's consumption. This transformation marked a significant positive change in her life and showcased the impact of the supportive measures provided.

Photo Gallery



Women farmers in District Lower Dir, KP working in their Food Production Gardens



Glimpses from District Rahim Yar Khan Punjab