UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment

Case Study Overview

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<th>Case Study Title</th>
<th>Visible Work: Invisible Workers</th>
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<td>Implemented by</td>
<td>UN Women Pakistan</td>
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<td>Funded by</td>
<td>The Royal Netherland Embassy</td>
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<td>Location</td>
<td>Sindh and Punjab Provinces (Pakistan)</td>
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<td>Focus Areas</td>
<td>1. Legal barriers</td>
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<td>2. Women workers in the informal economy</td>
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<td>3. Improving pay and conditions</td>
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<td>Budget</td>
<td>US$2,648,253</td>
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<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Jan. 2013</td>
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<td>End date</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
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Abstract

Pakistan is faced with multiple challenges on women’s empowerment front and is ranked as one of the bottom most countries on gender equality indicators including women’s economic participation. It is evident through women’s labour force participation rate (26%) in the formal employment opportunities as most of the workers especially women are concentrated in the informal economy and are devoid of recognition, access to decent wages or social protection coverage. These home based workers are mostly invisible therefore UN Women initiated a project titled “Towards Gender Equality: Women’s Economic Empowerment- Home Based Workers” with the financial support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy from January 2013 to June 2016. The cost of the project was US$2,648,253 (NOK 15,000,000) in which UN Women Pakistan provided US$190,000 in kind.

The project focused on the informal women workers (home based workers) and has supported the advocacy for adoption of policies and legislation for their right to be recognized as workers and access social security benefits. UN Women worked with the Government (Labour and Human Resource Departments in Sindh and Punjab for drafting policies and legislations and supporting registration of home based workers, Social Welfare Department for advocating to allocate funds for home based workers), Private Sector companies (Employers, contractors), civil society organizations and Home Based Workers (for their organization into groups, unionization, forming cooperatives, establishing enterprise funds, developing employable skills, improving their access to finance and markets and their recruitment in formal employment opportunities).

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1The Global Gender Gap Report 2015
Problems Being Addressed

Pakistan’s development indicators are deteriorating especially for women. Despite the existence of policies and the intentions to integrate gender equality in all operations, UNDP’s Human Development Report 2015 reveals Pakistan’s ranking in Human Development Indices (HDI) at 147 out of 188 countries, with 45.6 percent of the population living below the poverty line, and 14.9 percent living near the multidimensional poverty line. Pakistan is also ranked 121 out of 188 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2015 with the 0.536 GII value. On the Gender Development Index (GDI), Pakistan has a value of 0.726 (the 2014 female HDI value is 0.436 in contrast with 0.601 for males). Women’s labour force participation in Pakistan is very low (26%). 70 percent of Pakistan’s economy is informal and women are overrepresented in it and are usually categorized as home-based piece-rate/ own account workers, or domestic workers with limited access to decent wages or social security benefits. Women home-based workers (HBWs) are part of the households that are amongst the poorest of the poor in Pakistan. Food insecurity and health problems are increasing among women HBWs due to the sharp increase in the cost of production (raw materials, electricity, water, transport, and other inputs) and the growing food prices across Pakistan. Women informal workers in both rural and urban areas are largely illiterate and lack financial independence.

During extreme events such as drought, floods and other climate-related disasters, women face additional risks, in large part due to gender inequities that result in women bearing the disproportional brunt of disaster impacts. These home-based workers are not recognized as workers and there are no legislation or social security benefits for them.

Approach and Implementation

Under the Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme, UN Women implemented various initiatives with the support of the Government of Norway. The programme interventions from 2008 to 2012 resulted in recognition by the Federal Government of Pakistan through the Ministry of Labour and Manpower of the HBWs category and the need to provide a protection mechanism for this category of informal workers, the majority of whom are women and children.

The WEE Programme uses a three pronged approach for promoting empowerment of women in Pakistan. It works at the policy level with government, with civil society, private sector and other stakeholders and with excluded groups of women (such as religious, ethnic minorities, women informal workers living below poverty line, women affected by conflicts, etc.) in the communities. The WEE Programme supports women, especially the poorest and most excluded in both formal and informal sector to become economically empowered, benefit from development and be better equipped for the future. WEE Programme works on the policy level with government for developing policies and programmes for supporting WEE programmes. It also works with the private sector for women’s empowerment and creating a favorable environment for women in formal jobs.

Some of the key interventions are as follows:

a) Policy level interventions:
This has resulted in the drafting and finalization of provincial policies and legislation in Sindh and Punjab for the enhanced protection and empowerment of women HBWs and advocating for adoption by the Provincial Cabinets, supporting Labour & Human Resource Departments (LHRDs) in the data collection of 22,000 women HBWs of Sindh and Punjab who will be registered with social security institutions upon

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the promulgation of relevant provincial laws; advocating with the Social Welfare Department, Government of the Punjab for allocation of 78,000 USD for the skills enhancement of women HBWs in the province. UN Women is also currently supporting the Government of Punjab in undertaking a survey on HBWs to highlight their socio economic disadvantage and propose recommendations for the Government programs accordingly.

b) Grassroots level interventions for economic empowerment of Women HBWs:
UN Women worked with informal workers’ in rural and urban areas and supporting them in accessing social security through Government schemes and private sector health insurance companies. UN Women also strengthened a union of women HBWs and supported the establishment of 19 cooperatives for 4000 women HBWs to strengthen their collective action for increased incomes and access to social security benefits. Women HBWs were oriented on unionization process in Sindh and Punjab in collaboration with Home Based Women Workers Association. The union also strengthened grassroots women HBWs’ leadership skills. Similarly, UN Women supported the establishment of ‘Enterprise Development Fund’ to provide sustainability to the 10 cooperatives in Punjab.

UN Women has not only provided economic opportunities but also bolstered women’s voice and agency through formation of 17 District Action Committees in Punjab and Sindh. These committees are mechanisms that provide informal women workers a platform to voice out their concerns at the district level with the government representatives and member parliamentarians. The District Action Committees linked several women survivors of violence with free medicolegal services available in their areas. Many women received microfinance through these committees’ support. Women HBWs also enjoyed exposure with District Government Departments so as to address their problems pertaining to their areas such as water and sanitation, improved infrastructure, etc. The Committees also provided women HBWs with the opportunity to get enrolled in the skills development institutes. Approximately 6300 women benefited from UN Women’s support in linking them with employable skills opportunities. Women HBWs received national identity cards through the project’s support. As a result, ten women contested the local government elections and two won the general counselor seats in their areas (Please see the results section below for more information).

c) Private Sector Interventions for Empowerment of Women:
UN Women also worked with the Private sector companies to encourage them to recruit more women in their workforce. As a result 1300 women HBWs were recruited in the private sector companies and increased their income considerably and also accessed social security benefits. 18 companies also signed UN Women-UN Global Compact Women’s Empowerment Principles in Punjab and Sindh committing to promote gender equality within their businesses and communities' projects.

One of the main challenges was ensuring women’s mobility which is culturally restricted. To overcome this challenge implementing partners conducted several meetings and exposure visits for the male family members that resulted into improving women’s mobility and participation in the programme. Frequent transfers of Senior Government officials has been a major hindrance in the implementation of the programme especially resulting into delay in the adoption of policies and laws in the provinces.

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3 Benazir Income Support Programme, Bait-ul- Mal, Zakat and Ushr
4 A mechanism to provide funds of 7,200 USD to three broader groups of HBWs (Common interest groups) based on different sectors so that they are independent to but raw material for their cooperatives.
Results

The project has achieved tremendous results in 3 years. Some of the main results are:

1. Two policies and legislations on HBWs drafted in the Sindh and Punjab Provinces awaiting approval from the provincial cabinets.
2. 22,000 women HBWs (10,000 HBWs in Sindh and 12,000 in Punjab) are registered with the LHRDs Sindh and Punjab.
3. 18 private companies in Sindh and Punjab signed the CEO statement of support of Women’s Empowerment Principles.
4. Women’s Economic Empowerment Guidelines and Indicators are developed for designing public sector programmes for provincial Departments.
5. 2,245 women began receiving social security benefits from the Government schemes in Punjab and Sindh.
6. 1300 women HBWs were recruited in the private sector companies and increased their income considerably and also accessed social security benefits.
7. 1,625 women received Computerized National ID cards also making them eligible for health insurance in the two provinces.
8. 19 cooperatives formed with at least 4000 women HBWs as members in Punjab and Sindh.
9. At least 2500 women received microfinance and had increased their access to markets in Punjab and Sindh.
10. 100 Membership Based Organizations (MBO) formed with membership of 3000 informal workers for financial inclusion and accessing loans.
11. District Action Committees were established in Sindh and Punjab. These District Action Committees brought together CSOs, government and informal workers on one platform to resolve issues of informal workers.

There is a great potential for scaling up these initiatives. LHRD Sindh has developed a project document to scale up the pilot project of HBWs registration to 4 district of Sindh with the Government’s resources. Similarly, UN Women is working with 5 private companies who have signed Women’s Empowerment Principles to improve women’s participation in their workforce at all tiers in Sialkot, Punjab. This will benefit 1500 more women HBWs in their access to income and social security benefits.

Links for Further Information

N/A

*Disclaimer: The case studies are written by implementing organizations. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Panel members.*