



Women milking a cow in a rural household.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT: CONSTRAINTS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO MINIMISE FINANCIAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS.

### Policy Message

- Women in Pakistan are playing a pivotal role in Livestock rearing, management, and business activities. However, their role is miserably neglected at all levels.
- Lack of ownership and training alongside socio-cultural barriers are hampering women's role in livestock. Thus, women should be considered real and genuine stakeholders of the Livestock subsector while taking any policy decisions.
- Ongoing programs of both government and private partnership level strengthening women's roles are improving at the regional level. However, these programs are short termed and should be sustainable enough.
- With the government's shift towards revolutionizing the livestock sector, the need is to utilize the full potential of these women under the umbrella of one coherent National Action Plan that can foster their role through eradicating financial, social, and cultural barriers.

Women of Pakistan, being over half of the population, are silently and extensively playing their role to improve the economic situation of their families and community through different mediums out of which Livestock rearing is one. The livestock sub sector holds importance for its prominent contribution to the country's GDP i.e. 11.69% during 2019-20. Owing to the socio-economic and cultural settings of the country, women are not able to fully utilize their potential. Women's participation can be encouraged through effective policy making and stronger institutional support. Thus, the realization of women's role in the sustainable development of the livestock sector and the provision of necessary facilities can gear up their role and make it much effective in the poverty alleviation of Pakistan.

### **The livestock sector is the backbone of the economy**

In agrarian countries like Pakistan, agricultural development is a predominant tool to reduce poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition but the sector has been facing severe constraints since long. In Pakistan, Agriculture stands out as the second largest sector for economic growth. Livestock, as a subsector, contributed a 60.56% share in Agricultural GDP, ensuring employment for more than

35 million people of Pakistan. The Livestock sub-sector plays its role in ensuring food security by producing products like milk, meat, ghee, eggs, etc, and catering to the increasing demand for food products of animal origin. It also contributes towards the national economy; by strengthening small scale farming practices, processing livestock and poultry products, and foreign exchange acquisition through export of meat, wool, ready-to-cook and eat food products, leather, and

## Featured case studies

### Goat and Sheep Rearing Scheme in Ahferom Woreda-Tigray, Ethiopia

Between 2013 and 2017, the Goat and Sheep Rearing Project of Farm Africa, in Tigray, Ethiopia provided a 'package' of three pregnant goats and sheep along with technical training on forage management, provision of animal health care, pre-emptive vaccination, community facilitation, and frequent visits for consultations to 4052 women. Unique key features included Animal Loss Insurance Plan and Revolving Loan Funds for creating a cycle of improved prosperity. This program not only economically empowered women with an increase in annual income up to 4,218Birr (c £142) in the first two years, but also improved their dietary diversity, education of kids, and investment in livestock and agriculture based startups along with an increase in herd size of their families.

### Integrated Agriculture and Nutrition Program in Burkina Faso (2010-2012)

HKIP's two-year enhanced-homestead food production (E-HFP) empowered mothers' and improved their nutritional outcomes through improved role of women in poultry and agriculture production. The results indicated that women's participation surged in health care decisions and purchases due to availability of land, recurrent training, provision of chicks, seeds, and animal feed provided by the program. These women further trained other women of their community through a long-lasting behavior change approach.

### Poultry Farming and Marketing at Kitui county, Eastern Kenya

Commercial poultry rearing in Kitui County targeted small-hold women farmers with a focus on increasing income, poultry production, and protein consumption at the household level to improve the effectiveness of the Kenyan National Poultry Policy. The project reached the success by providing 377 Ken broilers for cross-breeding, training on improved poultry rearing techniques, disease diagnosis, vaccination, feeding, poultry management, and building easy access to farmers' association and strong linkages in the profitable market. An increase in poultry production from 35% - 60% indicated; more people can be reached out through local radio programs and training local women as trainers.



Women livestock keepers taking basic training for early disease management of their animals.

animal hides. Therefore, the Livestock sector is regarded as the backbone of the economy.

### Women Participation in Livestock sector:

Roles of women in different regions are accustomed to variation owing to differences in family setup, economic conditions, and social forces.

a. Women as rural farmer/ livestock keeper:

Rural women spend 15-16 hours daily on livestock-related activities, comprising a collection of fodder, feeding, animal/shed cleaning, manure, dung cakes making for domestic fuel use, milking, processing, and marketing of dairy products as indicated by some researchers. They look after animals such as sheep, goats, and backyard poultry. Thus, women complete more than 90% of animal-related tasks in Pakistan. Due to close monitoring practices, they are usually conscious and the first determinant to notice if an animal is sick or in heat. These activities eliminate the need for hiring specific labor and help generate cash income through sale of milk or other livestock by-products. As the Livestock farming and dairy production business has already become very expensive. However, in terms of national accounts, these activities are not accounted as "economically active employment" and only regarded as a contribution towards sustainable livelihood and wellbeing of rural families. However, with a shift in approach towards profitability through basic education, awareness, and facilities, these women can improve their socio-economic capabilities. Moreover, introducing digital tools, e-commerce markets, labor-saving technologies, easy banking, subsidized products can help these women establish

small and medium enterprises.

b. Women as livestock professionals and advocates:

As professionals, women work as extension agents to ensure community education, food/meat inspectors, animal geneticist, breeding professionals, and researchers. If these women are provided with daycare facilities, a comfortable work environment, security, recognition, and social capital they will be more motivated, encouraged, and supported to continue their work professionally on a larger scale as leaders.

### Constraints halting women participation in Livestock:

Women are not able to own and cherish their role as livestock owners rather they keep on being the helping hand. Hence, Policymakers neither realize the importance of their role nor devise any schemes for their skill development and welfare. This hinders them in achieving economic stability and decision-making capacity. Socio-cultural constraints; mobility issues, lack of market-oriented approach, male-dominated market area, zero or limited ownership of animals and land, less exposure to animal health training, medicine, and extension service halts them from establishing enterprises. Female veterinarians and educated farmers cannot enroll in development programs and apply for loans or equipment without a male. Also, the programs currently being offered are short-termed.

### How can women participation in the livestock development sector boost the country's economy in compliance to 2030 SDG?

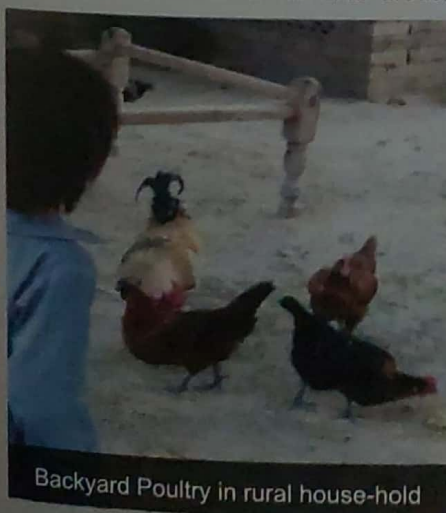
No economy can prosper until there is gender equality in every field of

life. Women's contribution should be encouraged and strengthened at a considerable level in the industry, market, agriculture, management, policy making, and governance to add value to the country's development, as stated in goal 5 of SDG. International reports suggest: GDP of Pakistan can rise to 30% if women are encouraged to work in every field. Currently, Pakistan with only a 4.3% employment rate of women is alarming enough to highlight the need of strengthening their role for economic development. Agriculture is the main character in the social and economic progression of developing nations. Therefore, it is integrally associated with the betterment of the state and holds a pivotal spot in the realization of the 2030 SDGs plan through maximizing human resources for development. An increase in this number through coherent plans and change in policy can contribute a great deal to uplift the country's prosperity.

### Existing livestock developmental programs for strengthening role of women:

Government in collaboration with private organizations and foreign funding agencies is planning to work towards enhancing the role of women in the livestock sector through easy access to microcredit, introducing sustainable social enterprise, livestock-related training, health insurance cards and allocation of domestic animals.

Historically, the contributions of Ehsaas Program, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), First Women Bank (FWB), Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited (ZTBL), Rural Support Programmes (RSP), Khushali Bank (KB) and Agha Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) are notable for supporting rural women across Pakistan through launching schemes and programs that increase income and employment opportunities for women in rural areas.



Backyard Poultry in rural house-hold

International firms like Nestle are actively engaged in capacity-building training, technical and financial assistance of their associated farmer's community to help them establish small and medium enterprises. Foreign Funding Projects of USAID, ACIAR, and FAO with its national key partners are also enhancing the role of women both as farmers and professionals. Overall, through the provision of regular counseling and discussion forums provided by these programs, the health status of animals, marketing facilities, and implementation of labor-saving techniques are improved.

Among these, the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) as a key partner for AVCCR and ASLP-Beef Dairy Project is focusing on the inclusion of women in developing strategies for value chain engagement and improved sustainable production that improves livelihoods and wellbeing of small ruminant farming families.

Moreover, Academic and Research Institute like Buffalo Research Institute (BRI) and Poultry Research Institute (PRI) also adds to the social empowerment of the women through saving time and fostering them to run their own poultry business in the rural areas. The government on both provincial and federal level, through its L&DD department, Punjab Rural Support Program (PRSP), etc is also engaging women by productive livestock activities through training and provisions of animals. Realizing the importance of women's role in livestock management, the current Government of Pakistan is engaging them in a number of projects. Among which, Prime Minister 'Backyard Poultry' initiative is very promising for supplementing family incomes, catering to malnourishment, and making women participative for poverty alleviation.

Limitations lie in these programs for catering to local/regional needs and their non-coherence to one National Action Plan developed by the Government to achieve combined goals. Moreover, ignorance, lack of ownership among women, low literacy rate, trust deficit, poor approach towards sustainability, and accessibility while designing research and development efforts lead to lower results.

### Handling financial and socio-cultural constraints for establishing sustainable livestock development programs for women:

There is a dire need of adopting better policies that are designed in reference to

financial, social, and cultural barriers of the region, aimed to enhance the effective role of women in the country through gender equity roles for the development of economically viable and sustainable livestock sector. Therefore, interventions for developing a plan for the sustainable livestock sector should be designed keeping in mind women's access to land, family relationship, annual and human capital, assets, and other productive resources. Following are suggested plans to increase human resource in the livestock sector by enhancing the role of women:

**a. House Level:** An increase in overall burden renders their productivity. Therefore, they should be provided with and introduced to easy and labor-saving technologies/machinery and practices for fodder cutting, milking process, and cleaning animals. Health, nutrition and disease status of their families should be improved through provision of nutrition value products, health facilities, medicine and necessary vaccination.

**b. Commercial Level:** A mindset shift, capacity building, and training for turning livestock products into commercialized products are required. Further, measures to resolve mobility constraints through introducing mobile-market, safe commercial centers, teleservices, and digital marketing platforms can help them increase their sales. Also, this will assist them in connecting with the global market.

**c. Economic Level:** For encouraging women to start their own viable business, the need is to locally build incubation centers through public/private collaborations and funding agencies that support women entrepreneurship through technical, social, and financial grounds. Also, providing them with micro-credit, easy loan schemes, and animal insurance plans will help them boost at the economic level.

### Policy implications

1—Launch a massive campaign to appraise the role of women in Livestock development throughout Pakistan.

2—Establish a Livestock Assistance Centre at each district that provides basic assistance, veterinary medicine facilities, and capacity-building facilities for women. However, such a facility can be merged with the existing veterinary infrastructure of hospitals in the earlier steps.

3—Introduce livestock incubation centers specifically for women that provide the seed money and training

for agri-entrepreneurship.

4—Introduce new microcredit schemes for women farmers and broaden the sphere of existing schemes for them.

5—Introduce massive facilitation for women to enable them to get equipments, agri-loans, and lands under their ownership as an independent entrepreneur.

6—Increase the capacity and capability of female livestock production and extension workers to overcome the cultural barriers.

7—Engage an increased number of female livestock workers as trainers for female farmers.

8—Facilitate needs of safety, accessibility to washrooms, daycare centers, mobility, and accommodation for female livestock veterinarians working in remote areas.

9—Introduce women to all modern production technologies and digital practices to make their work more efficient.

10—Establish female farmers' support groups, e-markets, radio and tele-services through digitalization tools.



Female veterinarians as extension agents for community education.

### Further Reading:

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### Explained Terminologies:

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product, It is an economic indicator used worldwide to show the economic health of a country.

**SDG Plan:** Sustainable Development Goals are Global Goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

**Extension:** It is a process of working with rural people in order to improve their livelihoods.

**Agripreneurship:** Marketing as well as manufacturing of different agricultural products and inputs.

**Food insecurity:** Disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources.

**Digital marketing:** Component of marketing that utilizes internet and online based digital technologies and digital media and platforms to promote products and services.

**Microcredit:** Common form of microfinance that involves an extremely small loan given to an individual to help them become self-employed or grow a small business

**Economic development:** Growth of the standard of living of a nation's people from a low-income (poor) economy to a high-income (rich) economy

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