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# SPOTLIGHT

## Our work on gender equality across Pakistan

In rural Pakistan, agricultural life revolves around the rhythm of harvest cycles. Amid this traditional context, local communities are challenging long-standing norms by reshaping the landscape of gender equality in agriculture.

This shift was inspired by ITC's Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) programme and began with a simple yet powerful step: ensuring that women's voices are heard.

By establishing Farmer Advisory Councils, both rural and urban women were invited to the 'decision-making table.' These councils became platforms for women farmers to drive change, influencing policies that not only empower them but also uplift entire communities.

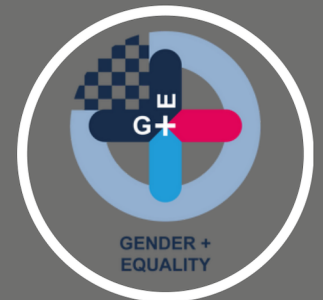
*By: The GRASP project  
& the GDI unit*

**Overcoming the  
hurdles to gender  
equality necessitates  
challenging  
perceptions that  
protect the status quo.**

**To address this head-on, GRASP launched a series of public-private dialogues and seminars, inviting experts and stakeholders to come together to rethink and brainstorm ways to strengthen women's access to market.**

**At these platforms, rural women spoke of the challenges they face, such as exclusion from formal training or their rights to owning land.**

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# Empowering Women in Agriculture: The GRASP Initiative

## Filling the technical gaps with Innovative Initiatives

The project is not only uplifting their voices but filling technical gaps with trainings specifically designed for women entrepreneurs, tailored to their needs as they cope with social and climate challenges. This includes digital entrepreneurship, livestock rearing, and information on climate resistant crop varieties available in the market.

Market expos and corresponding networking events further support women entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses, challenging stereotypes, and showing their contributions.

Even though many rural women from Sindh and Balochistan province usually face limited access to larger markets, they were able to present products ranging from purified butter, healthy snacks made of dates and fruit, and dehydrated garlic, chili, and onion powder.



As a result, they made remarkable connections and sales at platforms such as the first Food Agriculture Expo in Karachi, and TDAP Wexnet Expo in Lahore.

One landmark initiative was the Marui Women's Livestock Market in Tando Allahyar. Here, women-led small businesses and livestock farmers found a platform to thrive, bypassing traditional middlemen and forging a path towards economic empowerment.

Another innovative initiative introduced by the programme came with creating 'gender desks' in collaboration with the Sindh Enterprise Development Fund. These desks provide women entrepreneurs with tools and resources to address their financial needs and access essential services, from financial literacy to business planning.

# Empowering Women in Agriculture: The GRASP Initiative

## Change through Partnerships and Collaboration

GRASP's impact extends beyond the confines of the council chambers. Collaborations with government institutions, particularly the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, drove capacity-building initiatives to develop gender-responsive policies.

Senior decision-makers from the Government of Sindh and Balochistan also received training on gender inclusion in policymaking.

At the grassroots level, seven local NGOs, each deeply rooted in the communities they serve, became allies of GRASP. Through targeted training programmes and support services, women were empowered to improve their productivity, as well as the quality and value addition of their products.

At ITC and on behalf of the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Group, we are proud that GRASP, through collaboration, partnership, and measurable outcomes, is empowering women entrepreneurs in agriculture across Pakistan.

## Gender Milestones

- 11 business support organizations can now better support women entrepreneurs with market connections, entrepreneurial skills, and access to finance.
- 6,713 rural women from Sindh and Balochistan improved the quality, productivity, and value addition of their products.
- 422 rural women entrepreneurs now have better access to buyers and markets.
- 81 women are receiving financial support for environmentally sustainable technologies.

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**GD Spotlight: Want to have your project and team highlighted for its transformative approach to Gender, Diversity and Inclusion?**

**Reach out to the GDI [unidiversity@intracen.org](mailto:unidiversity@intracen.org) and let us share your successes, learning, and mainstreaming efforts with all of ITC!**

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