ANNUAL REPORT (DRAFT)

Catalyzing the transition towards sustainable development

Sustainable Development Policy Institute
All rights are reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic or mechanical), including photocopying, recording or information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher.

A publication of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad

SDPI is an independent, non-profit research institute on sustainable development.

@ 2023 by Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Acknowledgement
The compilation of this report would not have been possible without the input and guidance from Board of Directors, Executive Director, and colleagues at the Institute.

Edited and Compiled by: Saleem Khilji
Designed by: Umair Hassan
INTRODUCTION
ABOUT SDPI

Founded 30 years ago (August 1992) on the recommendation of Pakistan National Conservation Strategy (NCS), also called Pakistan’s Agenda 21, SDPI was registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. The NCS outlined the need for an independent policy think tank to serve as a source of expertise for policy formulation, policy analysis, policy intervention, and policy programme advisory services. SDPI strives for bridging research-policy gap through effective policy outreach and capacity building.

MISSION

To catalyze the transition towards sustainable development defined as the enhancement of peace, social justice and wellbeing within and across generations.

VISION

To be the centre of excellence on sustainable development policy research, capacity building and advocacy in Pakistan.
SDPI at a Glance
Mr Shafqat Kakakhel  
Chairperson  
Former Ambassador  
Former UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNEP

Syed Naveed Qamar  
Member  
Former Federal Minister for Commerce

Mr Shamim Ahmad Khan  
Member  
Non Executive Director, Packages and IGI Insurance, and Abbott Laboratories

Prof. Dr Samina Amin Qadir  
Member  
Former Vice-Chancellor Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

Engr M. Abdul Jabbar  
Member  
Chief Executive Officer Automotive MFG (Pvt) Ltd

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal  
Member  
Former Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

Malik Amin Aslam  
Member  
Former Federal Minister / Former Advisor to the Prime Minister for Environment

Mr Adil Khattak  
Member  
Chief Executive Officer, Attock Refinery Limited

Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha  
Member  
Former Senator  
Member of NCHD

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri  
Ex-Officio Member  
Executive Director, SDPI

Ms Aisha Khan  
Member  
Chief Executive Officer, Mountain & Glacier Protection Organization
Glimpses from the Past
25th Sustainable Development Conference
Silver Jubilee Sustainable Development Conference

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UNUSUAL TIMES: BUILDING FORWARD BETTER

5-8 December 2021
POLICY RESEARCH
FOOD & AGRICULTURE
Partnership for Advocacy on Nutrition related Policies in Pakistan

Time Frame: May 2023- April-2024
Partner: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is in dire need of an all-encompassing national nutrition policy to guide the federating units to adopt context appropriate harmonized approach, e.g. food system, education system, social protection system, WASH system, health system, etc. in line with the national and provincial priorities and evolving trends. The project will mobilize multiple stakeholders from diverse sectors to participate in engagement workshops and take ownership of the policy formulation process. National and provincial level stakeholders, including implementation authorities, the SUN business network, young experts, and women- and youth-led organizations working on nutrition will participate in consultations, engage, and connect with each other and provide inputs to policies.

Objectives: This initiative aims to assist the government of Pakistan to formulate the following nutrition related policies and measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pakistan Multisectoral National Nutrition Policy 2023-30</th>
<th>National Healthy Diets Policy:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devised in coordination with the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, this policy will be the guiding document for all provinces to adopt a context-specific and synergized systems-level approach.</td>
<td>This policy will address the dietary needs of the population with the help of the government for aligning, strengthening, and prioritizing the actions needed to ensure improved access, availability, and demand of healthy diets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Nutrition Research Agenda:</th>
<th>Food System Dashboard:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This will serve as the guidance tool for different entities working on Nutrition in Pakistan. Similarly, under this agenda top ten priority areas will be identified for providing guidance to academia and research entities to conduct research.</td>
<td>A ‘Subnational Food Systems Dashboard’ will be set up in partnership with the government to collect national and local data across a range of key food system indicators. This dashboard will enable experts to utilize data for policymaking and future studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAJOR ACTIVITIES

An advocacy campaign will be launched taking all stakeholders on board to develop a critical mass through a vibrant engagement with legislators, media, health/nutrition experts, line departments and thought leaders from the very beginning. Social and traditional media (both print and electronic) will also be used extensively to create momentum.

OUTCOME

A policy Implementation Plan having inputs and consensus of diverse stakeholders, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and agreed on, will be made to ensure the successful implementation of all aforementioned policies.

Focal Person: Qasim Shah
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Green Development Programme

Time frame: May 2023 – April 2024.
Partner: Embassy of People’s Republic of China, Islamabad

INTRODUCTION

SDPI has conducted extensive evidence-based outreach activities to create an enabling environment for greening of the investments under CPEC. While Pakistan and China have shown policy support for the green development, the geopolitical turmoil driven by the Russia-Ukraine conflict had immediate adverse socio-economic impacts on Pakistan’s energy sector. On the one hand, it imperiled the economic recovery from COVID-19, inflation, energy and food insecurity, on the other, disruption in energy supply chain is among the current challenges faced by the decision makers. Apart from the energy sector, China has also made significant strides in agriculture and transport sectors. Being an agriculture-based economy, this also provides an opportunity for Pakistan to learn from the Chinese practices. This also opens a wide number of opportunities, including cross-country capacity building, knowledge sharing, and trade programmes.

To address these opportunities, SDPI and Embassy of People’s Republic of China are collaborating to foster green development under CPEC around two broader themes, i.e. i) Sustainable Energy, and ii) Sustainable Agriculture. This project aims to achieve the following objectives:

• By mid-2024, the project aims to communicate the socio-economic benefits of sustainable agriculture (Precision and Climate Smart) and its development prospects under CPEC to all the stakeholders through research-led advocacy activities.
• By mid-2024, the project aims to minimize policy and regulatory barriers hindering the investment of Chinese private sector in Sustainable Energy of Pakistan.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• To upscale Chinese private sector financing, there is a need to develop a long-term policy for renewable energy-based adaptation and mitigation plans to ensure mechanism for facilitation and promotion of investments in RE projects.
• There is a dire need for the capacity building of financial institutions, policy makers, developers and the affected communities on environmental (and social) risk evaluation, risk management and relevant international reporting for energy projects with international collaboration as well as digital and offline knowledge sharing.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

• A policy dialogue on “Transforming the Power Sector: Exploring the Prospects of China-Pakistan Just Energy Transition Partnership” was held.
• A High-Level Symposium on “Renewable Energy Collaboration under CPEC: A Diplomatic Discourse” was held.
• A High-Level Policy Dialogue on “Climate Smart Agriculture: Lessons from China” will be organized.
• Annual State of Renewable Energy Conference 2023 will be organized.

**OUTCOME**

The following publications will be produced.

• A scoping study on “Sustainable Agriculture in Pakistan: Cross learnings from China”.
• An Experts Committee on Sustainable Agriculture (with key experts from both China and Pakistan).
• A policy paper on “Fostering the drive to sustainable energy: Options and Challenges for the Chinese Private Sector”.
• Policy briefs on Secondary Markets for Solar PV in Pakistan.

**Focal Person:** Ubaid ur Rehman Zia
Innovation for Food Security and Afghanistan-Pak Trade in Agriculture: Bridging Ideas to Action through Hackathon and Funding Partnerships

Time Frame: July 2023- February 2024
Partners: Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)

INTRODUCTION

After the COVID-19 pandemic followed by Russian invasion of Ukraine, the extreme climate conditions and supply chain disruptions led to external price shocks and a deteriorating food security outlook in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Floods in Pakistan affected millions of people, who are now facing food shortages and malnutrition. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has projected that around 73% of households in flood-affected areas have inadequate resources to afford basic nutritional food, which means Pakistan’s progress towards achieving SDG-2 is not satisfactory.

According to the United Nations, 95% of the population in Afghanistan is not having enough food and this percentage increases to 100% in female-headed households. As many as 28 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan are faced with acute malnutrition and 3.5 million children require nutritional treatment support. Trade-based linkages between the two countries, which could increase the supply of food and reduce prices, are also weak. This project aims to present practical solutions to the issue.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

• A 2-day Hackathon is being held in Islamabad from November 17-18 where experts from both the countries will present practical solutions to tackle food-related challenges.
• A number of seminars/webinars will be organized.
• The Project Report will be launched.

OUTCOME

The hackathon will serve as a platform for promoting startup culture and innovative ecosystem focusing on providing local solutions for food security in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Focal Person: Asif Javed
ECONOMIC GROWTH & TRADE
Technical Assistance for Pakistan Single Window (PSW) – Bridging Digital Innovation and Sustainability

Time Frame: June 2022 to June 2023
Partners: Centre for International Private Enterprise / National Network of Economic Think-Tanks

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan Single Window (PSW) is an integrated digital platform that allows parties involved in trade to lodge standardized information and documents with a single-entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. PSW required assistance for developing a capacity-building programme to ensure its sustainability. SDPI developed an e-learning platform that shall be utilized to organize regular trainings, and certifications for the PSW users and all other stakeholders.

This project mainly focused on mapping of PSW processes in line with the United Nations 2030 agenda. The data shared by Federal Bureau of Revenue and PSW was utilized for the creation of knowledge products.

SDPI shall support PSW to facilitate democratic governance through open trade, accountability, transparency, and responsive government through the positive engagement of the vibrant, inclusive, ethical, and empowered private sector. Furthermore, the awareness campaign and capacity-building initiatives will result in more informed stakeholders for trade ecosystem-level development resulting in the achievement of PSW's long-term goals.

Objectives: This project aims to align the SDPI’s research on economic growth with that of Pakistan Single Window (PSW) in areas of action research, advocacy & outreach, and capacity-building. It also aims to aware all stakeholders of the international trade ecosystem about inclusive communication, training, certification, and accreditation mechanisms of the PSW.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Under this project, the following activities were carried out.

• 20 Key Informant Interviews and four Focus Group Discussions were held with a diverse set of stakeholders in private sector, including women, and minority people
owning their business.

- A series of five hybrid trainings and five hybrid ToTs were conducted in Quetta, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. For each of the hybrid training sessions, the modules focused on “Digital opportunities for traders and entrepreneurs”, “Free Trade Agreements”, “GSP+”, “Trade Maps”, and “Orientation to PSW”. For the ToTs, the modules focused on “Train the Trainer program” and “What PSW is”.

- A series of bilingual (English and Urdu) outreach and awareness-raising activities was done, which included 12 podcasts, 11 webinars, four quarterly private sector awareness sessions in remote cities unable to join webinars, four quarterly media briefings for the media fraternity, and two Op-Eds were published in leading English dailies.

- One Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) was organized that focused on involving a broader network of stakeholders from civil society, academia, private sector, media, and government to present and discuss the technical policy paper.

- Two methodological frameworks titled: “Sustainability Framework” and “Trade Facilitation Monitor”, were produced.

OUTCOME

An independent institutional Private Sector Advisory Committee (PSAC) was formed comprising representatives from importers, exporters, logistic partners, financial institutions, academia, and think tanks.

A technical policy paper having several operational and strategic recommendations was produced.

An e-learning platform was established for the traders who can benefit from the courses and curriculum. The courses

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- A consensus should be built on the reform agenda implementation items such as PSW. Recently, the requirement for consensus creation with regard to economic policies is being debated by the government. This requires a charter of the economy between all mainstream political parties.

- The political consensus should in no way be a factor in limiting the policy, legislative, regulatory, and procedural reforms that should be included in the continuous improvement cycle of the PSW. The PSW company needs to provide a timeline on the public website for both micro and macro-level interventions that will be carried out in the PSW system in the near future.

- The surveys may be conducted for the target audience of the users through online or telephonic inquiry and will eventually create feedback optimizing the performance of each feature of the PSW.

- The integration issues with the financial institutions need to be resolved as soon as possible.

- Monitoring and evaluation of the PSW system should be done on regular basis by engaging academia and research institutes by forming a dedicated working group on trade facilitation.
provide Train the Trainer (ToT) modules on PSW based on the needs assessment of PSAC members.

**IMPACT**

The capacity-building programme has been made an integral part of the PSW operations. It will bridge the gap between the public and private sectors. The formulation of PSAC will help improve the overall trade ecosystem by providing staunch recommendations to PSW governing council.

**Focal Person:** Ahad Nazir
Mobilizing Economic Reformers to Keep Critical Civic Space Open in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Time Frame: July 2021 to June 2023
Partners: Centre for International Private Enterprise/National Network of Economic Think-Tanks

INTRODUCTION

The project was specifically designed for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to assess the business regulatory environment for various segments, geographies, and firms in the province. Problems faced by the large enterprises in the province discourage small businesses to scale up and foreign investors to enter into joint ventures. Through an inclusive and scientific approach, progress on evidence collection and subsequent outreach and communication activities was made that led to an inductive perception about the private sector in the regulatory environment of the province. The project focused on the accountability and principles of democracy by convincing the government to employ evidence-based decision-making and working on both the supply and demand side for a better business regulatory environment.

Objective: To ensure that true principles of democracy and accountability are practiced, the project aims to provide an evidence-based set of recommendations that can be taken forward to facilitate the private sector in playing its role in society and, in hindsight, result in an inclusive decision-making process with an enhanced focus on debate and consultation.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Following activities were held during the project time frame:

• A survey was conducted with a focus on developing a strategy for KP Business regulatory environment. A business assessment report was also produced.
• Pre-budget proposals for the FY 22-23 and FY 23-24 were collected from all the chambers of commerce and Industries as well as business associations.

OUTCOME

• One policy brief focusing on the perspectives of marginalized communities, including women, youth, and local businesses especially in Newly Merged Districts, was produced.
• One policy brief with a focus on the investment regime in KP was produced.
• One policy paper that explores the potential of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade in improving KP's business environment was produced.
• A legal review was conducted followed by a validation public-private dialogue that helped in improving the legislative aspect of doing business in KP.
• Eight Op-Eds were published in English, Urdu, and local dialects in leading newspapers.
• Seven Public-Private Dialogues (PPDs) were organized by the National Network of Economic Think Tanks (NNETT) with a regional (divisional) focus, resulting in the development of staunch policy recommendations.
• More than 300 stakeholders were engaged during the project, who were briefed on how to improve their businesses.

IMPACT

A ease of doing business strategy devised by the SDPI will certainly improve the overall business regulatory environment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Focal Person: Ahad Nazir

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• There is a need to strengthen coordination and collaboration among various sectors and stakeholders involved in KP's development to optimize resources and expertise for more effective outcomes.
• Tax relief measures, particularly in sales and income taxes, need to be proposed to alleviate the financial burden on small businesses and encourage their growth and sustainability.
• There is a need to advocate for grants and financial support specifically aimed at supporting the growth and development of micro and small enterprises.
• The implementation of robust import control measures should be prioritized to address trade imbalances and regulatory challenges. This will create a more balanced trade environment and provide a foundation for promoting export growth.
• Regular interaction between academia and industry should be encouraged for knowledge exchange, innovation, and research collaboration. This integration will bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical applications, supporting industry growth and technological advancements.
• The government should promote the cottage industry by developing the local infrastructure to improve their market visibility.
**Small Businesses, Big Impacts: A Fair COVID-19 Recovery for Micro and Small Enterprises in South Asia Based on Country-Level Studies of Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka**

**Time frame:** January 2022 - December 2023  
**Partner:** Southern Voice (SV) – Global Hub

**INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic widely impacted micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in South Asia, leading to closure of businesses, income loss, and job cuts. Employing a mixed-method approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, the research reveals that the government interventions were instrumental in sustaining MSMEs during the crisis. However, disparities in accessibility hindered many informal and unregistered businesses from accessing vital financial support and exacerbating pre-existing income inequalities. Gendered inequalities were pronounced with women entrepreneurs and workers facing prolonged recovery periods. MSMEs showcased resilience by adopting digital tools and leveraging social capital to navigate challenges. Despite these coping mechanisms, substantial layoffs and wage cuts occurred, particularly in the informal sector.

This study underscores the pressing need for more inclusive and targeted support mechanisms to ensure a resilient recovery for MSMEs while addressing persistent gender, urban-rural, formal, and informal inequalities.

**Objective:** This study examines the profound impact of the pandemic on MSMEs in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka with a particular focus on inequalities, coping mechanisms, and policy responses.

**Focal Person:** Dr. Fareeha Armughan

---

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Governments in the region should craft policies that are explicitly tailored to MSMEs’ unique profiles, incorporating variables like size, industry sector, and gender of the owner.
- The rapid pace of digitalization has been both a challenge and an opportunity for MSMEs.
- Recognizing the varying degrees of digital readiness among MSMEs, governments should introduce a comprehensive digital toolkit.
- The value of community-based models and social capital cannot be overlooked. To facilitate recovery, governments should take proactive steps to cultivate social networks, peer interactions, and network literacy, particularly among marginalized communities.
Gender Policy & Economic Development: Applying the Disaster Resilience Lens

**Time Frame:** March 2023 – November 2023  
**Partners:** Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office/Revenue Mobilization Investment & Trade

**INTRODUCTION**

The recent floods in Pakistan have caused a big loss of lives and livelihoods. A more adverse impact can be seen on women, who were impacted socially and economically. The devastation caused by the floods generated a national debate to build resilience especially of women, who are even more vulnerable to increased disaster risk. Pre-floods, Pakistan had launched a comprehensive National Gender Policy Framework, State Bank launched its financial inclusion strategy, while the Board of Investment has been working on the Asaan Karobar Act 2023 to give a legal structure to Regulatory Modernization. All these three policy frameworks focus the financial empowerment of women at a time when disaster risk was not man made. Thus, the recent floods and its impact on women and increased future risks have made it important to review these policy frameworks to address them from the Disaster Risk Reduction perspective and include recommendations that can lead to improved policy frameworks and implementation vis-a-vis gender.

**Objectives:** The study aims to assess gaps in three policies/acts defined above from a purely gender angle and additionally how these need to be modified to help women become more resilient against future disasters. The study has suggested amendments or augmentation to these policies and laws to make them more responsive to gender empowerment and building resilience of women against disasters.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

A desk review and a statistical analysis have been conducted. Besides, a stakeholders’ consultation and seminars have also been organized.

**OUTCOME**

A research report titled: Gender Policy & Economic Development: Applying the Disaster Resilience Lens, is in the final stages.

**Focal Person:** Dr Fareeha Armughan

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) approach need to be outlined in detail and include Theory of Change as an important component that assess the impact of women entrepreneurship programmes.
- Access to finance encourages women to initiate their own small business, and it may help women entrepreneurs to expand and grow their ongoing business.
Firms’ Financial Inclusion and Export Performance: Evidence from Manufacturing Sector of Pakistan

Time Frame: April 2022 – September 2023
Partners: Research for Social Transformation & Advancement/ Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's export performance remained low and unimpressive despite employing several measures to improve it. Limited availability of long-term financing for firms to expand export capacity is one of the key factors impeding Pakistan's export performance. Literature provides robust evidence on the fact that firms' financial inclusion ensures sustainable economic growth induced by export performance and orientation. The study aims to conceptualize the impact of firms' financial inclusion on export performance in the case of Pakistan. It further quantifies the effect of firms' financial variables and other covariates on firms' export performance through Multi-Factor Model. The sample includes the manufacturing firms listed on Pakistan Stock Exchange, and the data comes from firms' balance sheet variables ranging from 1999-2020. The study intends to provide an evidence-based policy framework that facilitates sustainable economic growth via robust export performance.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Literature Review, Data Digitization and Collection, and GMM and Quantile Regression Analysis have been carried out.

OUTCOME

A research report titled: Firms’ Financial Inclusion and Export Performance: Evidence From Manufacturing Sector of Pakistan, has been published.

Focal Person: Dr Fareeha Armughan

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A balanced asset mix is crucial for improving exports. To avoid excessive leverage risks, firms must balance debt and equity. Diversifying the asset mix to include liquid and intellectual property can boost export success. Gearing affects export performance differently depending on a firm’s debt levels. Firms, specifically the manufacturing firms, need to enhance their assets and resources, which significantly impacts the firms' export performance. The findings suggest that the composition of assets in the LSM sector should consider the development of intangible assets, as they play a significant role in firms' export performance in developed countries with high financial development. The National Tariff Policy, which imposes high tariffs on imported items, has an anti-export bias. To introduce textile-sector dyes, tariffs must be at Bangladesh's level.
The Promise of Ejo Heza: A Brighter Future for All Rwandans

Time Frame: September 2022-Jan 2023
Partner: A World Bank Group

INTRODUCTION

The low pension coverage within the informal sector/self-employed/part-time workers has motivated countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to operationalize voluntary schemes. The voluntary schemes globally differ in design, incentives, who they target, and withdrawal rules, but the objective for all is to offer a scheme that meets the needs of those traditionally excluded from formal sector schemes. Among such schemes, Rwanda's Ejo Heza Long-Term Saving Scheme has emerged as a success story globally given its rapid coverage growth. Introduced in 2018 under Law No 29/2017, Ejo Heza was designed as a voluntary defined contribution scheme with short-term withdrawals under specific contribution levels and targeted incentives to cater to the characteristics of informal sector workers.

Objectives: This study is the result of a two-year engagement between the World Bank team and RSSB. It aims to give an overview of the Ejo Heza scheme, highlight its key strengths, and provide recommendations to improve coverage, adequacy, operational efficiency, and long-run viability.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep doing what's working, fix the gaps, and explore new avenues.
- Focus on improving persistency and preparing for withdrawals/payouts.
- Revisit incentives as ‘experience’ on the scheme develops.
- Improve interoperability with other government systems and integrate with the private sector.
- Generate quarterly reports on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators for management.
- Collect better data and use it for policy making: Build a more extensive profile of members by cross-referencing data from other government databases as relevant.

OUTCOME

A research paper titled: The Promise of Ejo Heza: A Brighter Future for All Rwandans, has been published.

Focal Person: Dr. Fareeha Armughan
Small Business, Big Impacts: Pandemics, Small & Microenterprises, and Fair Recovery in Pakistan

Time Frame: January 2022 - July 2023
Partner: Southern Voice (SV) – Global Hub

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent policy measures had a significant impact on Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan. It has not only exacerbated the existing challenges but also created new inequalities for the owners and workers of the SMEs.

The lockdowns resulted in decreased production activities, affecting both demand and supply, which, in turn, created a notable effect on the financial health of SMEs. It led to significant inequalities between and within these enterprises and the workers, thus highlighting the need for urgent policy action to address these issues.

Objectives: This study aims to explore the pandemic impact on the SMEs in general and looks at their financial health in particular, e.g. the adverse effects on workers, and the coping strategies of owners and employees.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The key factors in effectively responding to a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic is reliable data.
- It is crucial to provide small and micro enterprises with financial support that is tailored to their needs. This includes funds and loans that allow for sufficient time to repay and achieve business goals, thus creating a more stable economic system.
- To support women entrepreneurs in accessing finance, the government can encourage female ownership in their sectors.
- By collaborating with private sector entities and relevant organizations, the government can cultivate an environment that nurtures IT growth.
- Formal mechanisms for registering employees with enterprises can help reduce inequalities between formal and informal employment. The government can facilitate this by ensuring that employees are covered by insurance and by strictly enforcing labor laws.
The study further draws the urgent attention of the government to act and implement measures to ensure the sustainability of SMEs in a post-COVID era in alignment with SDGs 1, 5, 8, and 10.

OUTCOME

A research paper titled: Small Business, Big Impacts: Pandemics, Small & Microenterprises, and Fair Recovery in Pakistan, has been published.

Focal Person: Dr. Fareeha Armughan
Scope of Digital Trade Integration for Pakistan and Central Asian States: An Action Plan

Time Frame: Feb 2023, to Nov 2023
Partner: CAREC Institute

INTRODUCTION

Digital trade integration requires free cross-border movement of not only digital products, services, and technologies but also other manufactured goods, data, capital, talent, and ideas along with the availability of integrated physical and virtual infrastructure. It also requires the removal of digital trade barriers as well as extensive technology, legal and policy coordination between the member states. It involves regulatory structures/policy designs, digital technologies, and business processes along the entire global/regional digital value chain.

This study focuses the significance and scope of digital trade integration between Pakistan and selected Central Asian countries.

Objective: The study aims to explore the scope of digital trade integration between Pakistan and selected Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and provide action plan for the stakeholders to promote regional integration.

OUTCOME

A detailed report will be produced.

Focal Person: Asif Javed

POICYC RECOMMENDATIONS

The governments should ensure digital inclusion by reducing the urban and rural divide. Learning on digital inclusion could be sourced from within the selected countries and factored into domestic digital trade policy and regulatory frameworks.

There is lack of local research in Pakistan and selected Central Asian countries on the sector-specific potential of SSTC. Social innovations at the local level could be developed through regional collaborative research efforts where one or more think tanks and universities could work together.

The governments should work collectively to enable regional online payment system. There is also lack of bilateral online channels to do transactions. The working group proposed initially, could deliberate, and propose the next plan of action in this regard.

Specific ICT capacity-building programs for youth, women, and the public particularly in rural areas to provide practical training in e-commerce are required.

By collaborating on aspects such as visa, compliance with standards, opening bank branches, harmonization of licences and permits can help promote regional integration for which more interaction among specialized national institutions is required.
CLEAN & GREEN ENERGY
Green CPEC Alliance Program

Timeframe: April 2023 – March 2024

INTRODUCTION

Under this programme, the Green CPEC Alliance (an alliance between SDPI and Pakistan China Institute) would re-direct Chinese investments away from emission-intense infrastructure and towards green infrastructure projects, e.g. from coal to renewable energy, and ideally an early retirement of existing coal-fired power plants. The alliance has worked with the stakeholders to scale the experiences of greening CPEC to greening the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The alliance will provide the basis for a full phasing-out of environmentally harmful projects in accordance with the Green Development Guidance for BRI projects.

Objectives: This programme aims to accelerate the greening of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the backdrop of regional turmoil and spiraling energy crisis.

Key thematic areas of the programme include:

- **ADB’s Energy Transition Mechanism:** Under this theme, the energy transition mechanism of ADB will be analyzed and how CPEC-related projects are being evaluated under it.
- **Shadow Energy Transition Mechanism:** Under this theme, a shadow energy transition mechanism of Pakistan will be developed through econometric modeling. Besides, a comparative cost-benefit (or SWOT) analysis of CFPPs under CPEC and GENCOs will also be conducted.
- **ESG framework of CPEC Projects:** Under this theme, a pilot ESG reporting framework, Pilot ESG toolkit and ESG guidelines will be developed for all energy projects under CPEC.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

- **High-Level policy dialogue on “Transforming the Power Sector: Exploring the Prospects of China-Pakistan Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETPs)”** was conducted.
- **High Level Symposium on**

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **To ensure uptake of renewable energy on behalf of the Chinese private sector, the government needs to open communication channels, including strategic communication for clarity & consistency (e.g. MoUs), involve stakeholders for diversity to ensure consensus and uniformity, on-time payments, provisions of liquidity damages, and ensures the sanctity of contracts.**
- **For greening of the investments coming under the CPEC, there is a need to collectively design a toolkit for the financing institutions that can help implement Environmental Social Management System (ESMS) for medium and high-risk projects, under**
“Renewable Energy Collaboration under CPEC: A Diplomatic Discourse” has been held.
• Consultation on “Scoping the feasibility of early retirement of coal power plants in Pakistan” has held.

OUTCOMES

• Position Papers at High Level Belt and Road Forum have been launched in Beijing.
• A shadow early retirement plan for coal power projects under CPEC.

which the clients report mitigation measures after every six months. This may include multiple phases ranging from project screening and evaluation to decommissioning of the project.

• Financing institutions, project developers, and regulatory bodies must provide a more supporting environment through different schemes, incentives, standards, rules and implementation guidelines for green investments under CPEC by striving to prefer environment-friendly projects over others and of the same financial risk level. These investments can be referred to against the Traffic Light System of the BRIGC green development guidance.

Focal Person: Ubaid ur Rehman Zia
Unlocking pathways to support implementation of carbon markets in Pakistan

**Timeframe:** August 2023 – June 2024  
**Partner:** Embassy of Denmark, Islamabad.

**INTRODUCTION**

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement is considered an opportunity to achieve national emission reduction targets more cost-effectively, as it allows countries to voluntarily cooperate to reach more ambitious reduction targets. There are financing mechanisms such as “Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCMs)” in place that play an extremely crucial role for optimizing climate resilient investments. Pakistan has participated in carbon trading through different initiatives such as Mangrove plantation project in Indus Delta (targeting $12 billion in revenue) which is selling carbon credits in global market. However, the country is still unable to harness its potential due to the absence of a carbon market. Among global leaders, who have efficiently overcome the climate and energy issues, Denmark is one of them. Now, it’s an opportune time for Pakistan to learn from Denmark.

Given this backdrop, SDPI in collaboration with Embassy of Denmark has initiated this project in Pakistan with the aim to develop a holistic strategy for a carbon market framework in Pakistan, address the current knowledge gaps, leverage international best practices, and build the capacity of stakeholders around the current opportunities, challenges, and the way forward.

**Objectives:**

Key objectives of the project include:

- The current knowledge gap in implementation framework of carbon is reduced by conducting a research study on Carbon markets.
- The discourse of carbon markets is expedited at both federal and provincial level by conducting capacity building and training of all relevant stakeholders across the carbon value chain of Pakistan.
- The discourse on “Implementation of carbon markets in Pakistan” to foster climate action is increased through advocacy and communications outreach activities such a social, print, and electronic media campaign, documentaries and awareness raising campaigns.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

Capacity Building sessions will be organized in which all the key stakeholders, including ministries, federal and provincial government officials, private sector, developers, journalists, and social media activists will take part.
OUTCOME

A holistic framework for the implementation of carbon markets in Pakistan will be developed in addition to the capacity building of different stakeholders, including public sector, private sector, journalists, and social media.

Focal Person: Ubaid ur Rehman Zia
Clean Energy Transition Programme

Timeframe September 2022 – October 2023

INTRODUCTION

It is a narrative building programme that was carried out in collaboration with the mainstream political parties to strengthen their political discourse. It revolved around research on policy and regulatory instruments for the offtake of renewable energy resources in Pakistan, supporting mechanisms for private/corporate sector for achieving their efficiency and decarbonization targets, and key enablers for clean energy transition in energy demand sectors.

For the advocacy of these themes, SDPI engaged parliamentarians, ministries, diplomats, and financing institutions, in addition to the institutions that directly impact the energy policy landscape of Pakistan.

Objectives: This programme aimed to build the narrative of clean energy transition in political discourse. Key thematic areas of the programme were as follows:

• Election Manifestos: Under this objective, we worked to integrate clean energy transition into political parties’ election manifestos through research-led advocacy. Based on research and stakeholders’ consultations, an “Agenda for energy sector reforms” was forwarded to all the political parties on behalf of SDPI and the Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs.

• Annual State of Renewable Energy: Annual State of Renewable Energy Report is an annual research product of SDPI that describes in detail the changing portfolio of renewable energy in Pakistan.

• Clean Energy Diplomacy: Under this theme, we engaged with foreign governments, development partners, and financing institutions to promote clean energy transition, emphasizing energy efficiency and decarbonizing demand sectors.

• Industrial Decarbonization: Under this theme, a scoping study was performed

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• To upscale the penetration of renewable energy in Pakistan, the Ministry of Energy needs to develop a comprehensive action plan under its regulatory and fiscal framework, in consultation with provinces within a fixed timeframe.

• To finance the Renewable Energy Transition, there is a need to develop structured finance products under the concessional financing framework by using Pakistan Credit Guarantee Company (PCGC) or InfraZamin through first-loss guarantee structures or junior equity provisions.

• For decarbonization of Pakistan’s hard to abating industrial sector, the government needs to develop an emission accounting mechanism and provide a legal cover for industrial data sharing, thus preventing them from losing market uniqueness and competitiveness.
conducted on decarbonization potential of hard to abating sectors with a special focus on cement sector of Pakistan.

- Power Wheeling: This theme contained activities that will be conducted to advocate the challenges for private sector around market-based power mechanisms (Wheeling and etc.).

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

Major activities done in this programme included:
- Parliamentary consultations on “Inclusion of Just Energy Transition and Climate Action in Election Manifestos 2023”
- A High-Level Policy Dialogues on “Energizing Pakistan's Future: Engagement with foreign diplomats on energy transition”
- “Annual Renewable Energy Conference 2023”
- Policy Dialogues on “Levers for Decarbonization of Pakistan's Cement Sector”.

**OUTCOMES**

- Annual State of Renewable Energy Report 2023 (to be launched at 26th SDC)
- Scoping study on Decarbonization of Pakistan's Cement sector [Published].
- Agenda for Pakistan's Energy Sector Reforms [Published].

**Focal Person:** Ubaid ur Rehman Zia
Fostering green, affordable, and inclusive energy transition in impoverished regions of Pakistan

**Time Frame**: March 2023 – October 2023  
**Partner**: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**INTRODUCTION**

Energy plays a crucial role in economic growth, a fact underscored by the recent triple ‘C’ crises (i.e. Climate Change, COVID-19, and Ukraine-Russia Conflict. These crises have inflicted heavy socio-economic losses on Pakistan due to climate-related infrastructure damage, demand, and supply chain disruptions due to lockdowns and geopolitical conflicts. These disruptions have caused a steep rise in fuel prices that is more strongly impacting the impoverished and low-income population.

To address these challenges, policymakers need to focus on affordable and environment-friendly energy sources that may promote an equitable energy transition, especially for the poor. Shifting towards sustainable energy is essential, but there’s a need to ensure affordability for those most affected by rising energy costs and environmental risks.

Considering the issues of affordability, reliability, and accessibility in the impoverished regions, UNESCAP-SDPI formed a consortium to conduct empirical research around renewable energy solutions. This study has explored opportunities to deploy sustainable energy technologies, as well as address energy poverty and inequality.

**Objectives**: Key objectives of the project include:

- To understand the current status of electricity access, including access tiers and key challenges hindering its growth;
- To take stock of different off-grid renewable energy-based models currently being practiced, and what success stories can be further upscaled to ensure access to clean and affordable energy;
- To conduct a survey around community's perception in response to different off-grid RE solutions and their willingness to install off-grid solar under the presence of different

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Civil Society Organizations working to support decentralized energy systems should work in collaboration with community-based organizations to create financial models that encourage the land affected people with reduced bills, tax exemptions, and additional social and environmental co-benefits.
- The Ministry of Energy should work with the provincial governments to create innovative business models for “last-mile energy service delivery”, especially ones that can lead to business opportunities and income generation through productive use of energy.
- To enhance expertise in the design, installation, and operation and
regulatory and financing instruments;

- To examine how energy access interventions may be designed to facilitate productive uses.

**MAJOR ACTIVITY**

A roundtable discussion titled: “Fostering a Green, Affordable, and Inclusive Energy Transition in Impoverished Regions of Pakistan” was held.

**OUTCOME**

A Policy Paper titled: “Fostering a Green, Affordable, and Inclusive Energy Transition in Impoverished Regions of Pakistan”, has been published.

**Focal Person:** Ubaid ur Rehman Zia
Unlocking private finance to support implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions in Pakistan.

Time Frame: March 2023 – October 2023
Partner: Private Financing Advisory Network

INTRODUCTION

To support global transition in line with Paris Agreement, substantial investments are required to facilitate low-carbon development. This may be categorized by the flow of finance from developed to developing countries as per international commitments, mobilization of local finance through private sector and local banks, and flow of finance through Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and Development Finance Institutions (DFIs). Under the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), presented in 2021, Pakistan has committed reducing its emission target by 50% by 2030 subject to the availability of international finance. The associated cost is estimated at $7-14 billion per annum till 2050 for adaptation and $101 billion for clean energy transition by 2030.

Objectives: To address this challenge, SDPI in collaboration with Private Financing Advisory Network (PFAN) initiated this project with the aim to achieve the following key objectives:

• To explore different avenues for financing institutions and development partners to bridge the financing gap needed to achieve a timely and just energy transition in Pakistan and fulfil its NDC commitments.
• To analyze the current status (distribution) of wealth in Pakistan and how upcoming investments can be transferred from existing sectors towards low-carbon development.
• To discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with mobilizing private finance to support energy transition and low carbon development.

MAJOR ACTIVITY

• A panel discussion on “Annual State of Renewable Energy 2023: Mobilizing the role of private sector financing” will be held on 26th SDC.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• To develop transparency of climate finance investments and to ensure that the investments are directed towards the right projects, the Ministry of Climate Change should work with policymakers and regulators to develop a robust and a strong Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for climate finance instruments to enhance credibility and accountability.
• The government in collaboration with State Bank, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, and Pakistan Stock Exchange need to develop a de-risking framework for climate finance. For
OUTCOME

A Research Report and investor’s guide in this regard has been produced which will be launched on the occasion of 26th Sustainable Development Conference in November.

Focal Person: Ubaid ur Rehman Zia

projects undertaken with foreign investors, de-risking mechanisms for currency devaluation, such as Currency Exchange Funds, should be developed with DFIs.

• To avoid currency devaluation risks, priority should be given to the financing contracts that provide funds to the local currency. For such projects, the government should provide incentives, and open a revolving account in collaboration with SBP to provide security to the medium and large-scale project investors.

• Information instruments like workshops, seminars, advertisements should be utilized to guide FI’s and green developers about the green principles, national and international covenants and protocols that Pakistan is part of or signatory to. Alongside, this information should be disseminated through media to enhance climate finance investment.
Energy Security in South Asia and Transition to Sustainable Sources

Time Frame: August 2023-October 2023.
Partner: Friedrich Naumann Foundation

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 67 per cent of the energy used in South Asia is reliant on imported fuel. In the recent past, disruptions within the international market such as increasing demand, insufficient supply and conflicts have put pressure on South Asian governments to ensure energy security within their countries. A probable solution could be to diversify energy sources, which can be achieved through regional cooperation and integration. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the region possess gas and oil reserves. Besides, Pakistan and Afghanistan have natural gas reserves; Similarly, Nepal and Bhutan have a high potential for hydroelectricity. However, switching to alternate sources, preferably renewable ones, will prove to be beneficial for the region. South Asian countries are engaged in cross-border power trade, but it exists typically bilaterally. Political tensions within the region primarily create a disabling environment for electricity trade and trans-regional power transmission. A regional energy policy might facilitate and accelerate the transition from dependence on non-renewable energy to sources of renewable and green energy. The region can easily rely on solar, wind, and hydropower generation.

Objectives: The study aimed to address the following questions:

• How can the affordability of distributed renewable energy be ensured for the impoverished segments and regions across the country? What positive gender impacts can be delivered?
• What kind of rules and regulations must be put into place to introduce credit facilities for inhabitants of impoverished areas and how they may also make use of net-metering?
• Can community-based public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a role in expediting the implementation of affordable energy sources?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• To address financing gap to support renewable energy uptake across South Asia, the government entities can collaborate with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and other Financial Institutions to establish a regional pool of “long-term investors” which can invest in long-term financing mechanisms such as issuance of bonds to attract investors.
• Given that South Asia lacks a “deep capital market”, there is need to establish a dedicated financial market for renewable energy projects. The regional financing tools may include R&D support, grants, soft loans and facilities, credit enhancement, credit lines, guarantees, incubators, public venture capital funds and public
• How can cross-border cooperation expedite energy transition for energy pressed countries in South Asia?

MAJOR ACTIVITIES
• A panel discussion on ‘Energy Security in South Asia and Transition to Sustainable Sources’ was held.
• A roundtable on ‘Supporting Energy Security in Pakistan and Transition to Sustainable Sources through Regional Cooperation’ was organized.

OUTCOME
A policy paper titled: South Asia’s Energy Transition: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Way Forward through Regional Cooperation, has been published.

Focal Person: Mahnoor Arshad
Sustainability and Resilience Programme
Community Resilience Research Network and Policy Outreach Activity

Timeframe: October 2022 to September 2023  
Partner: Creative Learning

INTRODUCTION

The Community Resilience Research Network (CRRN) and Policy Outreach Activity focused on evidence-based P/CVE research influencing national policy targets. This was done through well-organized and measurable activities focused on evidence-based policy advocacy and stakeholder mobilization. The policy advocacy and research initiatives ensured that the publications from CRRN reach policymakers. The CRRN includes members from the media, civil society, and local government institutions in addition to academia. Experts from across the disciplines of Political Science, International Relations, Sociology, Political Economy, Communications, Education, Religious Studies, Psychology, Criminology, Anthropology, and other related fields were invited to join the network.

Travel Grants: As part of the project, we have awarded five competitive internal travel grants to the network members. The objective was to provide network members with an opportunity to present their research on Countering Violent Extremism to an international audience.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The following activities were done during the project implementation period.

• A total of 3 one-day media training workshops for media professionals were organized under this project in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi (one at each location). The purpose of these workshops was to share some research-based knowledge produced by the members of the CRRN with media professionals on community resilience and countering/preventing violent extremism so that they are able to prioritize community resilience, P/CVE in their reporting and storytelling in line with the role of media in shaping public perceptions on community resilience.

• As many as 12 policy dialogues were organized in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi. The objective of these sessions was to Provide policymakers and policy influencers with the evidence they need to make informed decisions about Community Resilience to Violent Extremism.

OUTCOME

• Throughout the period, the project has generated valuable evidence-based insights into Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Pakistan, along with practical solutions.

• In total, 9 policy papers and 6 synthesis papers were produced. The Policy
Papers have been published in SDPI publication series. Out of 6 synthesis papers, two have been published in journals while two have been published by SDPI and the remaining two are at the disposal of the authors, who can publish either with SDPI or outside. The themes related to CVE in the context of Pakistan with a focus on evidence-based local literature were chosen for these papers.

- The network members produced 42 Op-Eds on the subject which were published in various national and local newspapers.

A list of Policy Papers and Synthesis Papers published or in the process of publication is as under:

**Policy Papers:**
1. Preventing Terrorism and Extremism in Pakistan after re-emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan: A perspective from southern Punjab
2. Fostering Community Resilience: Harnessing Pashtun Folklore and Local Voices against Violent Extremism
3. Countering Violent Extremism through Social Cohesion and Community Resilience Approach
4. State Building and Good Governance as an Antidote to Violent Extremism
5. Opting for an Integrated Approach to Countering Violent Extremism from Educational Institutions: A case of Southern Punjab
6. Role of Students’ Societies/Unions in Creating Peace, Harmony and Tolerance in Universities in Punjab
7. Developing Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism through Evidence Based Policy & Practices of Curriculum Development The case of Pakistan Studies
8. Analyzing Legislative Framework and Cyber Security Responses against Violent Extremism and Terrorism
9. Countering Violent Extremism through Financial Literacy - A New Paradigm for Pakistan

**Synthesis Papers:**
1. A Synthesis of Pakistan's Counter Violence Extremism Approaches
2. Exploring Factors in Countering Violent Extremism to Promote Resilience Insights from Research in Pakistan
3. Exploring Radicalization among Women in Pakistan: Causative Factors and Impact
4. Religious Extremism and Community Resilience: Case Study of Pakistan

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To address the challenge of Violent Extremism (VE), it is important to develop a comprehensive strategy that takes into account various factors responsible for VE. These include socio-cultural, psychological, and political factors. Additionally, it is necessary to implement a comprehensive and inclusive response plan that identifies the underlying causes of violent extremism. This plan must provide support to rural communities, particularly addressing socio-economic disparities by providing opportunities for education and employment.
IMPACT

An MoU has been signed with the P/CVE wing recently established at the National Anti-terrorism Authority (NACTA). SDPI and the wing will work closely in terms of research exchange and capacity building activities. The P/CVE wing of NATCA is a dedicated entity that comprises over 100 different level analysts.

Dr Shafqat Munir, the project lead, has been appointed as member of the Research and Policy Working Group on CVE set up at the Press Information Department, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

University of Karachi, University of Punjab, University of Management and Technology Lahore, and many other universities in Pakistan have either started CVE as a subject or set up as department/center.

Focal Person: Muhammad Awais Umar

- The justice system should be reformed to address the trust deficit and to build cordial state-citizens relationship. It is crucial to establish a framework based on theoretical foundations which can help us understand the issue of violent extremism. This framework should also address the issue of religious thought in educational institutions, including screening for emotional intelligence.

- Youth and policymakers must be sensitized on sensible use of digital platforms for countering violent extremism. Policy interventions should be developed to provide support to vulnerable populations, including women and minorities, to counter violent extremism. The establishment of a fair and impartial justice system that upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of their social or religious background, should be the top priority.
‘Technology Enhanced Stakeholder Collaboration for Supporting Risk-Sensitive Sustainable Urban Development’

**Timeframe:** October 2022 to Oct 2023  
**Partner:** University of Salford/ Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)

**INTRODUCTION**

The study tried to address priority number two of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), which is to strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk and contribute to the remaining three priorities (understanding disaster risks, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response).

It aimed to promote a participatory approach that supports the transparent and democratic involvement of all the stakeholders to analyze, forecast, visualize, and debate disaster-risk trade-offs and to choose development plans that ensure sustainability and equitable resilience, giving considerations to climate change adaptation.

**Objectives:** The basic objective of the project is to investigate socio-technical systems required for enabling a transition towards a more risk-sensitive and transformative urban development approach in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Malaysia.

**MAJOR ACTIVITY**

At least 8 research studies were conducted in Peshawar and Nowshera with several associated activities, including interviews, and workshops.

**OUTCOME**

Corresponding journal papers were produced by project partners.

**IMPACT**

An android Application developed and operational in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can also be scaled up at national level.

**Focal Person:** Salman Danish

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Digitally enhanced multi-agency collaboration models must be designed.
- Resilience frameworks that can measure actual resilience should be formulated.
- There is a need to adopt digital approaches for modelling community & infrastructure vulnerability.
- Modelling of cascading effect of disasters should be done.
- Social media and real-time intelligence gathering to support disaster response need to be used.
- 3D visualization of real-time satellite data need to be arranged for constructing live disaster events to support disaster response.
- There is a need to adopt digital platforms by the national agencies.
**Partnership Influencing climate resilience agenda**

**Time Frame:** May 2023 to October 2023  
**Partner:** Oxfam

**INTRODUCTION**

The study revolves around the four key thematic areas such as: i) climate resilience (e.g. climate finance), ii) Disaster Risk Reduction-DRR (hazard, risk/vulnerabilities reduction), iii) Loss and damage, and iv) Institutional capacity building.

SDPI believes that these four themes are interconnected amid a debate on climate justice and climate finance. During this debate, the haves have owned plenty of resources, including cash, which the have-nots need the most to handle loss & damage and adoption to climate change and building institutional capacity both on climate adaptation and DRR, risks and vulnerabilities.

In this context, it is a well-thought-out project that focuses influencing as part of the Oxfam’s programming approach to advocate to change norms, behaviours, as well as policy and practice. The project employed added tools of evidence, lobby work, and wider alliance and partnership building to influence the policy elites at national, regional, and global levels.

**Objective:** The main objective of the project is to forge a strategic partnership to influence the decision-making circles in the four key thematic areas.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

- Produced four Policy Position Papers around above mentioned thematic areas.
- Conducted four research seminars to present papers and invite feedback from sector experts and government officials to strengthen papers.
- Briefing/meetings with government officials to share policy briefs and full papers to advocate change.
- Launch of papers in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore followed by capacity development trainings.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is a need to align the existing policies and build synergies among various institutions to develop a comprehensive and coherent national climate finance strategy that helps fund local level climate actions in line with national and global development goals and climate action plans. Technical and human resource capacity issues require serious consideration. The quality and authenticity backed by accurate data in proposals will be a key if Pakistan aspires to access climate finance avenues.
- NDMA and PDMAs should extend full support in gearing up DDMAs as regularly functioning bodies at the district level to ensure that they fulfil their mandated roles and responsibilities. Each DDMA in
for media and civil society around climate action.

- **Pre COP28 national level consultation with government, parliamentarians, academia and civil society.**

**OUTCOME**

Four policy position papers were published.

**Focal Person:** Ahmed Khaver

disaster prone areas should be given better equipment for its emergency operations, a management information system, and stronger technical capacity. Additionally, contingency stocks should be stored in the vicinity of vulnerable areas so that boats and other relief and rescue work can be started immediately.

- There should be a Central Secretariat for reporting, compilation, and databasing of data on climate action coming in from both provincial and federal sources. Additionally, there is a need to build capacity and resources to provide or actualize the Secretariat. The Secretariat shall keep engaging with a cohort from within concerned departments and ministries and have regular capacity-building sessions as well as cohort meetings to ensure built-in capacity for reporting progress on the implementation of climate actions.

- Implementation of localized early warning systems, coupled with regular drills, can significantly improve readiness for emergencies. Thirdly, fostering partnerships between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and communities will promote effective coordination and resource allocation during crises.
CLIMATE CHANGE & MIGRATION
Research on the trends and impacts of climate change on migration in Pakistan

Timeline: January 2023 to April 2023
Partner: International Organization of Migration (IOM)

INTRODUCTION

Climate change impact is increasing with each passing year in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas where an estimated 132 million population is dependent upon climate-sensitive livelihoods. The ability of rural population to cope with or adapt to the changing environmental situation depends on social, economic, and human capital in addition to their technical capacities as to how they can be able to diversify their (agricultural) incomes. It requires updated knowledge about new techniques, climate resistant crop varieties and access to government support programmes, which at present are inadequate.

The sudden onset of events (such as floods, heavy rainfall, heatwaves, droughts) occur frequently incurring loss of human lives, land, livelihood sources and infrastructure. Likewise, the slow onset of events (such as rise in temperature and sea level) are responsible for the gradual decline in agriculture productivity, degradation of ecosystem services, shifting of cropping zone, increase in crop water requirement, and decline in soil fertility, thus reducing farm income and labour requirements. A recent global report on internal displacement places Pakistan among 50 countries that show new increasing trends of displacement due to floods, heavy monsoon rainfall along with other non-climatic factors such as conflicts and earthquakes.

The National Climate Change Policy has no agreed operational definition of climate induced migration; therefore, the country has no data for mapping the scale of phenomena and potential to mitigate the migration pressure. This has made climate-induced migration invisible at policy and implementation level.

Objectives: This study had the following objectives:

- To engage communities to discuss and analyze their issues relating to climate change, environmental degradation and migration;
- To strengthen their resilience for climate adaptation.
MAJOR ACTIVITIES

- 45 semi structured interviews of affected gender and migrants were conducted in Swat, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dadu.
- 15 FGDs comprising targeted group of flood and drought affected population, migrants and return migrants were organized.
- One on one meetings were held with key local stakeholders, including academics, urban unit, planning unit, NGOs, CSOs and important provincial stakeholder in Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi and Quetta.

OUTCOME

A research report on ‘Trends and Patterns of Climate Induced Migration’ was published.

Focal Person: Dr Kashif Majeed Salik

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration itself provides an alternate source of livelihood or survival strategy for the vulnerable population. The wellbeing and security of vulnerable migrants may decline due to the complex inter-relationship between migration and socio-economic, political, cultural, and demographic factors. These are critical issues that require attention of multiple stakeholders and need to be addressed through well-coordinated efforts from various departments.

Efforts are on to have an agreed operational definition of climate induced migration so that it might be incorporated in the NCCP.

The last decade observed growth in climate migrants, who move to urban and peri-urban areas for their livelihood. Though the pattern varies, few displacements are seasonal, few are cyclical and a few are permanent. Approximately two million people in the country are expected to become climate migrants by 2050.
Establishing a regional learning and action platform—A knowledge hub on labour migration in South Asia

Timeline: October 2021 to July 2023
Partner: International Labor Organization

INTRODUCTION

Labour migration is one of the key pillars of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) which stresses the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation at global level. At the time of GCM adoption, the UN Member States also agreed to establish a Capacity Building Mechanism that will include a global knowledge platform with the objective to support governments in the implementation of GCM.

In this perspective, this study to reviewed the existing policies of various countries to protect their migrants, return migrants focusing on how to protect international migrants and their rights. It identified the important themes (i.e. migration policies, gender and migration, migration and health, migration and development, and adverse drivers of migration) to focus on. Sub-themes would be identified later.

In this effort, our regional partners were: International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), India; Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka; Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM), Nepal.

Objectives: For the implementation of the GCM at the national and regional levels, the study aimed to conceptualize the establishment of a Knowledge Hub in South Asia.
The Knowledge Hub will bridge information gaps on labour migration in South Asia on the one hand, and on the other it will examine specific labour migration and mobility issues through a broader lens of decent work and the socio-politico-economic trends in the sub-region and beyond. Initially, it will establish links and collaborations among the partners.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

Capacity building programmes were carried out to impart training to young researchers in South Asia on migration concepts, measures, theories, research issues and various aspects of migration. A number of seminars and meetings were conducted.

**OUTCOMES**

- A Migration Portal was developed which consists of a repository of data and evidence on migration and related issues in South Asian countries. It will create a space for governments, civil society, trade unions, private sector, academics and thinks tanks to engage with new research so as to bring broader perspectives and empirical evidence to policy discussions.

- Research was published in the form of newsletters, books, articles, research papers, etc.

- Under this programme, researchers and institutions in South Asia working on labour migration or related themes will be connected.

- Internships and fellowships will be provided to young scholars to participate in capacity building and learning programmes.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

South Asian countries, including Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh, heavily depend on foreign remittances. They offer secure livelihoods to underprivileged rural communities through international labor migration. However, these countries face challenges in implementing migration policies and achieving SDGs related migration targets (including safe, orderly and regular migration, decent work promotion, lowering migration cost), especially for unskilled laborers. To address these critical issues, both national and regional attention is required with a particular focus on collaborative research and knowledge-sharing hubs at the regional level.

_Focal Person: Dr. Kashif Majeed Salik_
Sustainable Human Mountain Settlement Assessment for Pakistan

Timeline: September 2023-November 2023
Partner: International Centre for integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

INTRODUCTION

Mountain human settlements that are exposed to climatic and non-climate factors are faced with multiple political, social, economic, and bio-physical change processes that generate several risks. In Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region, the population residing either in rural or urban areas, are simultaneously exposed to multiple risks, from climate change to massive environmental degradation, to social change, population growth, urbanization, and poverty and inequality, along with technological, cultural, and political dynamism.

Presently, the HKH region in Pakistan houses 16.8 million population, a number swiftly increasing due to migration, urbanization, and tourism. Consequently, 19 out of 33 per cent of the country's urban population resides in the HKH region. The rapid influx of urban dwellers, growing at a rate of 5 per cent annually, combined with 80 million yearly tourists, strains the availability of scarce natural resources for the local population. For instance, demographic development due to changes in community dynamics has adversely affected the natural resources in the form of deforestation, depleting underground water resources, declining agriculture productivity and environmental degradation.

Objectives: In view of the above scenario, the specific objectives of the scoping assessment are:

• To understand key trends and development changes in mountain settlements;
• To stock take the current risks, challenges, and opportunities in the context of compounding risks and impacts of climatic and other socioeconomic changes;
• To foster collaboration to enhance the sustainability and resilience of human mountain settlements.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

• A methodological framework has been developed for the scoping assessment, and enlist the key stakeholders in Pakistan, who are working on the issues of human settlements in the mountains.
• A rapid assessment has been done in a selected mountain settlement in Pakistan.
OUTCOME

• A synthesis document based on literature view and secondary data in line with the framework of assessment study has been produced.
• The first draft of the scoping assessment report from Pakistan, combining synthesis of review and rapid field assessment in Pakistan has been submitted.
• The final report of the scoping assessment, including recommendations and feedback on the draft report, is in the offing.

Focal Person: Dr Kashif Majeed Salik
Indo-Pak Climate Collective

**Time Frame:** April 2023 - April 2024 (Phase I)
**Partner:** German Embassy

**INTRODUCTION**

Indo-Pak Climate Collective is a German embassy initiative that focuses on promoting bilateral cooperation on various aspects of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and transboundary environmental governance. The study will be completed in three phases. During the inaugural phase (2023-2024), the Indo-Pak Climate Collective will take up the issue of smog that plagues various parts of Pakistan and India. It is a very serious issue that needs bilateral cooperation on an urgent basis.

**Objective:** The study aims to explore the issue of air pollution in India and Pakistan with special reference to smog.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

An overall study on air pollution, crop residue burning, and vehicle pollution is being conducted.

**OUTCOME**

A book comprising different policy papers will be compiled.

**IMPACT**

An expected outcome is both Pakistan and India will be able to tackle the issue of smog.

**Focal Person:** Junaid Zahid
HEALTH & EDUCATION
Strengthening Pakistan’s Policy Framework on Tobacco Taxation, HTPs/E-cigarettes/SLTs, including ONPs and Tobacco Pack Warnings

Time Frame: March 2023 to May 2024
Partner: Bloomberg Philanthropies

INTRODUCTION

Novel nicotine and tobacco products (pouches and vaping devices) have made rapid ingress in Pakistan. In the absence of a distinct policy, these products are spreading across the length and breadth of the country where the number of tobacco users is in millions.

This project not only stresses the need for curbing tobacco use in all its forms but also curtails the use of novel nicotine, and tobacco products and devices. In this regard, the project aims to facilitate policy development in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and tobacco control partners.

The project highlights that there is a long overdue and unaddressed Graphic Health Warning (GHW) policy and rotation issue. The GHW size was increased to 60% in June 2019 to measure the impact. However, the impact was not measured, the pictures were not changed, the size was not increased/proposed to be increased, the textual warning was not changed/updated, and no rotation was affected.

Even there is no long-term tobacco taxation policy. The project further develops a tobacco industry (TI) monitoring plan and maps the environmental impact of tobacco and its products.

It may be mentioned that most of the tobacco control policies were enacted and implemented through Statutory Regulatory Ordinances (SROs).

Objectives: Following are the objectives of the project.

• To assist the Ministries of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination, and Finance in inter-ministerial efforts for the development of a tobacco taxation and pricing policy;
• To provide technical support for policy positions on Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs), Electronic cigarettes (E-cigs), smoking chemicals liquid, nicotine pouches & Smokeless Tobacco;
• To generate evidence to counter Pakistan’s tobacco industry and its allies’ manipulations of tobacco control;
• To support the Ministry of Health (MoH) in existing Tobacco Control Laws (TCLs) on GHW on tobacco/nicotine products, including its rotation.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

An SDPI delegation led by the Executive Director called on the Honorable President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi, on 8 March 2023, to discuss measures for reducing tobacco
consumption in Pakistan. The delegation suggested reconsidering the contents of the Statutory Regulatory Ordinance (SRO) for heated tobacco products at par with the other tobacco products issued by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination.

A delegation of SDPI led by Executive Director Dr Abid Suleri meets President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi to inform him of the efforts on tobacco control.

In this regard, the delegation also sought a meeting between the Ministry’s technical advisory group and experts from CSOs, think tanks, academia, media, and independent medical researchers.

SDPI has held a series of webinars on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) MPOWER measures to create awareness among the youth and those who are unaware of the ill-effects of tobacco use.

**OUTCOME**

- Tobacco & New Nicotine Products in Pakistan: A Market and User Survey is in technical review process and will be launched soon.
- A Conversation with Dr Gan Quan WNTD 2023 (Available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZwNOauQ6HI)
- A policy brief on Tobacco Taxation

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Pakistan is currently following a complex two-tiered tobacco taxation system. As a result, tax evasion and under taxation has been observed in Tobacco Industry. To stop it, there is an urgent need for a simple uniform tobacco taxation structure.

- Being a cottage industry, smokeless tobacco products are largely untaxed in Pakistan. Therefore, bringing smokeless tobacco under taxation gambit and banning of all electronic nicotine/tobacco products is immediately required.
Policy Scope of the Framework is in technical review process.
• A policy brief on Tobacco Taxation Regional and Global Best Practices, comprising recommendations is also in technical review process.

IMPACT

All these efforts will help curb the menace of tobacco and Pakistan will soon come up with a concrete tobacco taxation policy in line with the guidelines provided by WHO’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Focal Person: Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi
Reducing Industrial Trans Fatty Acids in Pakistan

**Time Frame:** October 2023 to June 2024  
**Partner:** Cargill

**INTRODUCTION**

Industrial trans fatty acids (iTFA) are a major public health concern in Pakistan with high levels of consumption linked to a range of health problems, including heart diseases, diabetes, and obesity. The food industry is a major contributor to the problem with many products containing high levels of trans fats. A study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reveals that Pakistan is one of the top 10 countries with the highest number of deaths attributable to iTFA consumption. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended reducing the intake of iTFA to less than 1% of total energy intake to prevent non-communicable diseases. The project has been prepared for a collaborative effort towards reducing iTFA in Pakistan.

**Objectives:** The major objectives of the study are as follows:

- To reduce the consumption of iTFA by increasing policy engagement, public awareness, and education about the health risks associated with iTFA consumption;
- To encourage the food industry to reformulate their products and reduce or eliminate iTFA from their products;
- To engage with the government and advocate the reduction or elimination of iTFA in the food supply.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

- A comprehensive review of the iTFA situation in Pakistan will be conducted.
- Policymakers and general public will be sensitized about the health risks associated with iTFA consumption. Besides,
- A database of iTFA-free alternatives will be maintained to share it with food industry representatives.

**Focal Person:** Fatima Muzammil
Pakistan Biosafety Capacity Building Programme

**Time Frame:** October 2023 to December 2023  
**Partner:** US Soybean Export Council

**INTRODUCTION**

The global surge in Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) has reached Pakistan's crucial oilseed sector, demanding a delicate balance between potential benefits and stringent safety. To address this challenge, a transparent Biosafety Clearance House is urgently needed. Current regulations and undergoing amendments lack comprehensive coverage. Thus, a focused capacity-building initiative integrating policy, regulations, licensing, and data management is vital. This initiative aims to enhance knowledge, streamline processes, and align practices with international standards, ensuring a robust regulatory framework for Pakistan's future.

**Objectives:** The study aims to:
- Analyze federal EPA's capacity needs for efficient license processing;
- Conduct targeted training on regulatory policies for safe market development;
- Ensure testing labs adhere to SOPs/ISO standards;
- Provide data analytics tools for informed decision-making;
- Study global biosafety regulations for best practices, guiding adaptation to international standards.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES**

- Comprehensive training will be conducted on GMO regulations, policy analysis, and global protocols.
- Expert-led FAQ session addressing biosafety, licensing, and GM event testing will be organized.
- Initiative outcomes will be compiled, future areas for development will be identified, and potential risks to licensing and lab standards will be highlighted.

**Focal Person:** Fatima Muzammil
Partnering with Local Actors to improve Health and Education Service Delivery

Time Frame: September 2022 To July 2023
Partner: Palladium under USAID’s NPI Expand HDA Program Grant

With the collaboration of Palladium Private Ltd, SDPI has implemented this project in Upper Dir District. This project was aimed to improve education and health service delivery through strengthening the capacity of the local government, enhancing civic participation in local level planning, and better utilization of available public resources to address the gaps in health and education service delivery in Upper Dir. The direct beneficiaries of the project included elected representatives of Tehsil councils, Village and Neighbourhood Councils, Tehsil administration, health care providers, teachers, PTC (Parents Teacher Council) and PCMC (Primary Care Management Committees) members, district health, education and population welfare department officials, and civil society organizations working in health and education service delivery in the district.

Objectives:
• To strengthen civic engagement by creating sustainable opportunity platforms for participatory local development planning for improved health and education service delivery.
• To develop innovative social accountability tools for identifying, prioritizing and addressing gaps in health and education service delivery.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

• Opportunity platforms/Committees (15 Committees at VC/NC and Tehsil Level were formed) for participatory planning at the local level for enhanced interaction between local elected representatives, service providers and other related institutions/individuals.
• Training of participants on local planning, budgeting, expenditure tracking through SAP, and its use for tracking expenditure viz a viz progress was conducted at local level.
• The project also successfully enhanced the capacity of the committees on the use of Citizen Report Card (CRC) to use data on social indicators (education and health) for identification of the needs and gaps in education and health at the
grassroot level and how to priorities these needs and fill gaps by strengthening accountability at local level.

- SDPI revitalized 24 PTCs and 7 PCMCs and also conducted three rounds of monthly meetings with 24 PTCs and four rounds of monthly meetings with 7 PCMCs. Previously, PTCs and PCMCs existed in project intervention areas but their engagement in the matters of improvement of school and BHU was missing due to lack of monthly meetings as per requirements of the official guidelines.

Focal Person: Qasim Shah
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
DEI for Facilitating Women in Policy under Women Leadership Program

Time Frame: September 2021- October 2023
Partner: Michigan State University, US Department of State & National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE)

INTRODUCTION

In August-September 2022, Visiting International Professional Program (VIPP) and the College of Education at Michigan State University, US selected and welcomed 25 Senior Women Leaders from Pakistan for a Leadership Development Program which is the part of a two-year US of State Department funded project in collaboration with Higher Education Commission (HEC). The programme aimed to address the equity gap in women’s leadership in Pakistan preparing them for Leadership/Advisory roles in future. The Programme focused on equipping and empowering women at different stages of leadership development, a process that occurs at the individual, institutional and system levels. It was a multi layered initiative with actions that:

- Provide women with professional learning in key content and skills necessary for decision-making;
- Build a mentored cadre of women leaders, who develop skills to mentor future leaders;
- Enlist local support and advocacy for promoting women to leadership positions;
- Develop a national platform of networking tools, resources, and mentoring expertise for future women leaders in Pakistan.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Under this program, a ‘Seminar Series’ was held focusing on the following five categories.
- Women in Power (Members of National and Provincial assemblies)
- Women in Bureaucracy
- Women in Diplomacy
- Women in Research & Development
- Women in Higher Education
- Women in Entrepreneurship
OUTCOME

• Under this programme, women were provided with professional learning in key content and skills necessary for decision-making.
• A cadre of women leaders was built, who have developed skills to mentor future leaders.
• A national platform of networking tools, resources, and mentoring expertise was set up for future women leaders in Pakistan.
• The Network for Women in Policy (NWIP) was launched.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

• There is a need to take proactive measures to improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusiveness.
• Women, who are aspiring to achieve higher positions need to attend mentoring and networking programmes, whether they are internationally linked, or institutionalized nationally.
• Upward mobility is always required that must be combined with some kind of decision-making responsibility.
• There is a need to introduce gender inclusive language at institutional level because it actually displays the character and the intent of the organization.
• Gender diversity does not mean that we only mentor and make equal opportunities for women, it also means that we have to reach out to the males and try to make spaces for women in the male dominated environment.

Focal Person: Dr. Fareeha Armughan
South South Cooperation
Research Study on Personnel Exchanges as a cooperation model for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Time Frame: May 2023-December 2023  
Partner: United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

Knowledge exchange has become the most important and dynamic pillar of South-South and triangular cooperation. It has gained prominence among developing countries who are increasingly recognizing that the good practices generated from the Global South have been cost-effective and easily adaptable. Exchanges of Southern expertise and knowledge offer viable pathways to address common challenges among the developing countries and to accelerate progress in the achievement of the SDGs.

The exchange of personnel in development cooperation allows for an intensive exchange of knowledge and skills that promote effective and sustainable development. In the reciprocal model, personnel move both North-South, South-North and South-South. Hence, in addition to enhancing partnerships, stimulate dialogue and support development activities in the South, the exchange of personnel also affects societies in the North.

Objectives: The study aims to explore the following questions.
What is the relevance of personnel exchange for achieving the development cooperation agendas and priorities?

It is well realized that in addition to the explicit focus on technical knowledge, international personnel exchange has aspects of indirect learning, whereby those being hosted gain insight and often sympathy with social, political, and cultural aspects of the host country. What is the Global South perspective on this form of “public diplomacy”?

How will COVID-19 and the growth of virtual meetings and learning arenas impact on personnel exchange in the years to come? How can a digital platform on South-South Cooperation such as the South-South Galaxy be utilized to compliment/contribute to personnel exchange?

OUTCOME

A research paper will be produced.

Focal Person: Asif Javed
POLICY ADVOCACY
**SDPI’s 26th Sustainable Development Conference**
**20 – 23 November 2023**

**Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair**

**Concept Note**

**Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) brings its annual 26th Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) from 20 – 23 November 2023 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The overarching theme of this year’s Conference is “Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair”.

The Conference is a flagship event of the Institute that not only provides a forum for SDPI’s own research but also invites other researchers, practitioners, policy makers and academia from the world over to share their work and engage in a dialogue with fellow panellists and audience. This annual event has been established as a prime conference in South Asia and beyond.

Carrying on with the tradition, SDC will be presenting the way forward amidst the global times of trial and SDPI would be upholding a beacon of light and be a source of inspiration.

Troubled times, dangerous times, times of uncertainty, times of political and economic turmoil, touching the rock bottom, deep in the abyss – such has been a bleak picture in Pakistan and various regions the world over.

The world is undergoing unprecedented times of political and economic turmoil, marked by uncertainty and despair due to multiple crises, conflicts, climate change, and the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. These challenges have severely impacted the development agenda, particularly in South Asia, where the effects of these crises have been most acute. Despite these challenges and trials, there is still hope for sustainable development. The light at the end of the tunnel will depend on the actions of governments, civil society organizations, private sector, and individuals who are actively engaged in addressing these crises and promoting sustainable development. The Conference aims to inspire hope and optimism for the future of the region and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient South Asia and beyond.

The Conference invites scholars, researchers, practitioners, legislators, bureaucrats, and other speakers to place their solutions on the table and share message of hope, inspiration, and optimism in times of despair. In retrospect, we need to examine the mistakes and take away the lessons learnt. Looking into the past 75 years, where

---

3 ChatGPT, personal communication, March 27, 2023
does the future take us another 25 years down the road? How will the regional alignments be beneficial? Learning from the past, what kind of economic, foreign, and social policies could be derived? How can the bridging divides be overcome? What are some of the pathways to sustainable development? The broader agenda is to have a futuristic discussion to achieve SDGs amidst the triple-C crisis, i.e., conflict, climate change, and COVID-19.

Over the years, SDPI has taken the initiatives in providing policy guidance to the various governments in Pakistan. Year 2023 is a year of elections for the country. The Institute’s mission has been to catalyse the transition towards sustainable development with a view of being a centre of excellence on sustainable development policy research, capacity development and advocacy in Pakistan. In this context, this SDC would assist the newly elected Parliament in its agenda-setting for a better tomorrow and a better Pakistan.

Under the overarching theme of “Light at the End of the Tunnel: Hope in Times of Despair”, the SDC will be holding sessions on related sub-themes. We invite papers on sub-themes including but not limited to:

- Poverty graduation
- Debt sustainability
- Political coherence and development
- Key policies for the new government/s
- Way ahead for climatic and environmental challenges
- Renewable energy
- Building resilience in times of crisis and conflict
- Climate action and sustainable development
- Private sector engagement for sustainable development
- Promoting inclusive and equitable development
- Innovation and technology for sustainable development
- Circular economy
- Universal health care
- Numerous other sub-themes will be the part of the overarching theme.

At SDPI’s flagship event, keynote speeches and interactive discussion panels/sessions will provide a platform for sharing and exchanging best practices, knowledge and experiences, and solutions for sustainable development in these troubled times.

**Conference Outcomes**

**Publications**

A peer reviewed anthology based on papers presented is launched at the succeeding Conference. Keeping with this tradition, the 26th SDC will launch the SDC 2022 peer
reviewed edited volume titled ‘Sustainable Development in Unusual Times: Building Forward Better’ along with other publications. Previous SDC anthologies can be viewed and downloaded for free from:

https://sdpi.org/sdconference/Beyond-the-Pandemic-Leaving-No-One-Behind/publications

Interactive Forum

The Conference will provide an interactive forum to researchers, experts, and scholars from different disciplines to find relevant ideas, best practices, and solutions in an atmosphere of sharing and exploring. The SDC’s Keynote Plenary Sessions and parallel panels will be broadcast live on SDPI’s web-based channel (www.sdpi.tv) and Facebook for wider dissemination.

Recap of the 25th Sustainable Development Conference 2022

The overarching theme of the Silver Jubilee Conference was “Sustainable Development in Unusual Times: Building Forward Better”. The mega event was held in a hybrid format where speakers/audience were able to join in person as well as online. Alongside SDC 2022, SDPI also hosted UNESCAP’s Sixth South and South-West Asia Forum (SSWAF) on the SDGs. This mega-event was jointly co-hosted by SDPI and the Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives. The 25th SDC and UNESCAP's Sixth South and South-West Asia Forum was attended by 345 panellists from 21 countries/region. Speakers joined the sessions from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, the UK, and the USA. All the sessions had a keen and interactive audience. The President of Pakistan, H.E. Dr Arif Alvi, was the Chief Guest at the Special Plenary at the last day of the Conference. Altogether a total of 46 sessions were organized of which 11 were plenary sessions and 35 concurrent sessions. An audience of over 5,000 attended the four-day hybrid Conference.

Focal Person: Ms Uzma T. Haroon

Policy Recommendations

Each SDC is about reaching policymakers and other stakeholders and sharing with them key policy recommendations. As done so in the previous Conferences, policy recommendations from the panels and plenary sessions are communicated to the decision-makers during plenary sessions and published in the annual anthology as well. Previous year’s policy recommendations can be accessed at https://sdpi.org/sdconference/sustainable-development-in-the-unusual-times-building-forward-better/policy-recommendations