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PROTECTION ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN FARMERS IN PAKISTAN

STUDY AND STRATEGY SOLUTIONS



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PROTECTION ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN FARMERS IN PAKISTAN

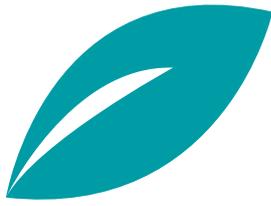
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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Islamabad, 2024

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Focus group discussion with women farmers in Mithrir Bhati Talka Mithi, Tharparkar, Sindh, April 2022.



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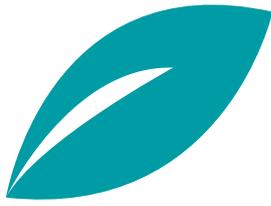
This study was commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) Country Office in Pakistan and conducted by the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA). Ms Benish Ibrahim, Ms Misbah Nazir and Dr Adnan Arshad of PODA conducted the study's field research in 68 locations across Pakistan. Ms Ayla Sohail and Mr Wajid Hussain of PODA completed the process of data collection and data analysis. The report was written by PODA and finalized by FAO. The final report was edited and designed by Ms Ruya Leghari, FAO Consultant. Ms Sameena Nazir, President and CEO of PODA, provided editing, oversight and strategic guidance for the overall research project.

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Above all, thanks are due to the thousands of rural women farmers across Pakistan who shared their stories, struggles, challenges, successes and aspirations with the study team. We pay tribute to their courage and resilience, and hope that the findings of this study on protection issues will contribute to improving the lives of women farmers nationwide.

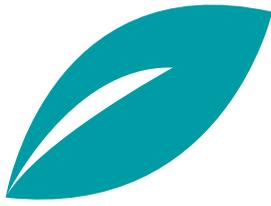


Focus group discussion with women farmers in Izatshah Lashari, Sukapur, Mirpur Sakra, Thatta, Sindh, April 2022.



Abbreviations

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
CBO	community-based organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
INGO	international non-governmental organization
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KPCSW	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women
NARC	National Agricultural Research Centre
NGO	non-governmental organization
PARC	Pakistan Agricultural Research Council
PCSW	Punjab Commission on the Status of Women
PODA	Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy
SCSW	Sindh Commission on the Status of Women
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme
VAW	violence against women



Focus group discussion with women farmers in Damas, Gahkuch, Ghizer, Gilgit-Baltistan, May 2022.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study identifies gender-related protection issues that impact women farmers in Pakistan, and suggests strategy solutions that can contribute to emergency and resilience strategies to safeguard their rights. It focuses on women farmers engaged in the production of four major crops: cotton, maize, wheat and vegetables/fruit. Women in the fisheries and livestock sectors were also interviewed to better understand women's contributions to food systems and climate change resilience. The study analyses the linkages between women's livelihoods, nutrition, literacy and child protection issues vis-à-vis rural women's understandings of well-being, protection and economic security. By examining these issues, the study seeks to shed light on the kind of policy reforms, technical assistance and departmental coordination required to address protection issues that affect women in agriculture.

The study was undertaken in the framework of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), 'Building capacities on food systems with a special focus on gender and women's empowerment', implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Pakistan.



Context

Approximately 74 percent of women and girls engaged in Pakistan's labour force work in the agriculture sector, which generates 40 percent of household income. Yet protection issues faced by women farmers in Pakistan remain little known and poorly documented. As such, they have not yet been addressed by policymaking in a systemic manner.

Data collection is a well-recognized tool for identifying the prevalence of gender-related protection issues and finding solutions. Research on protection issues faced by women in agriculture is especially relevant in Pakistan, where women's and girls' Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.464 in 2018, compared to an HDI value of 0.622 for men and boys, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI) value of 0.747. Moreover, Pakistan ranks 153rd of 156 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.

Despite the important and varied roles that women play in agriculture, most women farmers do not own the land they work on, do not receive equal wages for work of equal value, and are particularly vulnerable to a range of protection challenges – such as harassment, economic exploitation, physical and psychological abuse. Women in agriculture and allied sectors risk being exposed to harassment or abuse by male farmers, supervisors, contractors, transporters, shopkeepers who buy their produce, landlords and informal local justice system committees, such as *Panchayats*. Violence against women in agriculture, especially against those women from poor and minority communities, has serious consequences. A study by the Aurat Foundation identifies a range of hazards faced by women and girls working on farms in Punjab – such as physical abuse, a lack of protective gear, exposure to chemicals which may increase risks to their reproductive health, limited information on hazards, and no medical services. Most women farmers have limited or no means of communicating their concerns about employment conditions, a situation that poses particular health risks for unpaid family workers due to the rising use of pesticides.

Rural women also experience challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition, in addition to a double burden of work – as they are expected to work on farms in addition to bearing primary responsibility for domestic care work, including child care. Social protection systems in Pakistan have not been able to reach all vulnerable rural women to ensure their access to social safety nets and health systems. Understanding the protection issues faced by women in Pakistan’s agriculture sector will help to inform solutions that can enable them to reach their full potential, enhance decent livelihoods, nutrition security, health, well-being and their contributions to sustainable development.



Key findings

This study’s findings confirm that women farmers are largely unrecognized for their vital

contributions to Pakistan’s agriculture sector, food security and the economy at large. Their labour tends to be undocumented and they are rarely referred to as ‘farmers’, unlike their male counterparts. Current understandings of who is a ‘farmer’ tend to consider that these individuals own the land they work on. However, this excludes huge numbers of farmers in Pakistan – particularly women – which prevents them from accessing vital benefits and services. Based on responses from more than 2,000 participants who engaged in this study, any man or woman involved in the following activities – which women farmers across the country are involved in – should be considered a ‘farmer’:

1. Sowing.
2. Transplanting.
3. Weeding.
4. Harvesting, including with hand-held tools.
5. Post-harvest operations, such as threshing, winnowing, drying, grinding, husking and storage.

6. Working with livestock, including milking, feeding, treating sick animals, herding, cutting and collecting fodder, caring for poultry, breeding, weaning, cleaning animal waste and shelters, converting manure into fuel or fertilizer, processing milk, and processing wool.

The 118 participants who participated in the six **stakeholder consultations** held for this study identified a range of challenges faced by women farmers. In terms of work-related challenges, they highlighted heavy workloads of between 12 to 18 hours per day, a lack of access to independent agricultural production (in terms of access to land, credit, water and technology), a lack of agriculture-related technical education and training opportunities, and limited access to advisory services. Women are also disadvantaged by poor access to transport, marketing mechanisms and banking services. They have few alternative sources of income generation, and as a result of the gender wage gap in agriculture, women earn less than men for work of equal value.

Other challenges include the lack of a minimum wage and collective bargaining in the agriculture sector, as well as delayed payments by contractors. Informal employment exposes women in agriculture to the risk of exploitation. Women’s vulnerability is exacerbated by their low levels of land ownership, lack of control over productive and financial assets, and mobility restrictions prompted by inequitable gender norms.

In terms of women’s well-being, protection issues include a lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities at work, as well as to basic health facilities. Health problems are common among women farmers due to the excessive use of pesticides. Low levels of awareness continue to hold women back – including limited awareness of protection issues, workers’ rights and the impacts of climate change.

Although national legislation is fairly comprehensive in terms of addressing violence against women, gaps and implementation challenges persist. Pakistan's labour laws do not cover the agriculture sector and the country lacks a national law to safeguard the rights of women involved in agriculture. However, the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 is a legislative milestone that other provinces can replicate.

Focus group discussions with 907 women across 43 districts suggest that sexual harassment is frequent and persistent in agricultural workplaces. Women farmers are often exposed to hostile working environments – including exposure to violence, harassment and verbal abuse, particularly while working in the fields. Focus group participants believe that both women workers and children are not safe in the fields. For instance, 81 percent of participants do not feel safe travelling alone for work, while 86.9 percent do not feel safe working alone in the fields. The discussions also highlighted mobility restrictions and a lack of sanitation and child care facilities as major challenges. Moreover, the focus groups reveal a lack of awareness among women farmers.

For instance, 85 percent of participants reported lacking information or knowledge about redressal mechanisms. Socioeconomic factors increase women's risk of exposure to violence and harassment in the agriculture sector – such as the pressure to contribute to their household's income. According to the focus groups, a lack of awareness of laws, reporting procedures and redressal mechanisms, coupled with the fear of losing their livelihoods, prevents women farmers from reporting incidents of violence and harassment to the authorities.

Among the 630 women who completed this study's **survey questionnaire**, a high proportion of respondents do not understand what the term 'harassment' means, or are unaware of harassment-related issues – ranging from 84 percent of respondents in Balochistan, to 42 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Many are unaware of existing laws to protect women – ranging from 96 percent of respondents in Balochistan to 44 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There appears to be a correlation between literacy rates and awareness of protection issues. For example, respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir – a region with higher literacy rates than the national average – displayed greater awareness of harassment-related issues and laws. This may also be due to awareness raising efforts. For instance, 66 percent of respondents in the region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported becoming aware of legislation through information sessions and training on the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010.

A considerable proportion of questionnaire respondents reported feeling insecure at work or travelling to work – ranging from 74 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir to 32 percent in Balochistan. It is worth noting that, in provinces where women report feeling more secure, they tend to work close to home or in groups, rather than alone. For instance, 65 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa feel secure at work. Several questionnaire respondents also expressed their willingness to address protection concerns.



Recommendations

Recommendations for federal and provincial governments, and legislators



1 Amend labour and agriculture policies at the federal and provincial levels to recognize all women who perform any work related to crops, fruit, vegetables, livestock, fisheries, poultry, dairy, forestry and post-harvest production as 'farmers', whether they work full-time or part-time, and including those who work on family farms but do not own land themselves.

- 2 Set a minimum wage for women farmers and ensure that their wages are not less than the wages of male agricultural workers for work of equal value.
- 3 Develop an implementation mechanism for the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 and review the mechanism annually to enable improvements.
- 4 Allocate unused land at the federal and provincial levels to landless rural women farmers and provide them with water and input subsidies to support their success.
- 5 Disseminate information to raise awareness of protection issues and violence against women through government information departments at the federal and provincial levels. This should include the use of the radio and television, as well as media campaigns in local language newspapers, with a view to addressing the underreporting of incidents of violence and harassment. Awareness raising materials should be directed at both men and women.
- 6 Ensure that the police and Departments of Labour, Agriculture and Women's Development work in coordination to monitor harassment and violence against women farmers, provide immediate relief to survivors, and support them to file complaints and use redressal mechanisms.
- 7 Develop and enforce policies to ensure safe and affordable transport services for women farmers provided by their employers. Hire female inspectors to oversee the implementation and functioning of these transport services.
- 8 Develop and enforce policies to ensure the provision of safe, clean and gender-segregated toilet facilities for women farmers. Hire female inspectors to monitor compliance and ensure that women have access to clean water and privacy in sanitation facilities.
- 9 Hire female staff in agriculture extension departments in every district in order to reach out to women farmers and provide them with technical assistance.
- 10 Include the labour and time spent by women in all fields of agricultural work in the national Labour Force Survey. Support women farmers to obtain health cards and register for old-age pensions.

Recommendations for civil society and the media

- 1 Prepare educational materials in local languages, including illustrations, and disseminate these among rural men and women farmers to raise awareness of women's rights, harassment and violence against women, and existing protection services – including avenues for referrals and details on laws to protect women from abuse and ensure the protection of whistle-blowers.
- 2 Highlight – through journalists and the media in all its forms (the print media, radio, television and social media) – the challenges faced by women farmers and promote their protection.
- 3 Address women working in the agriculture sector as 'women farmers' across civil society and the media in order to promote the recognition of their labour and contributions,

as well as their access to social protection and old-age benefits.

4 Review the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019, bringing together women's groups and civil society organizations, monitor the government's implementation of the Act and monitor compliance with the Act to ensure that women farmers benefit from it.

5 Support rural women farmers to participate in leadership meetings so that their collective voices, ideas and demands are heard.

6 Document cases of protection issues faced by women in agriculture through women's rights NGOs, as well as success stories of positive outcomes from both women's and men's perspectives.

Recommendations for FAO

1 Promote the rights of women farmers by working with the government, civil society and the media to promote measures that address the protection issues they face.

2 Prioritize the development of multi-year projects with civil society – especially women's rights NGOs – that place women farmers' protection from violence at the centre of all activities on agriculture, nutrition and food security, in order to advance long-term change in Pakistan.

3 Add a women's rights and protection component to every technical training on agriculture to enable women to learn about laws that can protect them from violence.

4 Provide technical assistance to government officials to integrate

protection issues in all government programmes. Enhance their understanding of the fact that not protecting women farmers from violence and harassment violates their human rights.

5 Provide technical assistance and funding to the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women to develop an implementation mechanism for the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019.

6 Facilitate the development of a Centre of Excellence on Gender Issues in Pakistan's agricultural universities to support their development of programmes on agriculture, nutrition and food security with a focus on the rights of women farmers.

Suggested key strategy solutions

I Advocate for a formal definition of 'women farmers' to ensure that their labour is recognized and counted in the same way as the work of male farmers in Pakistan.

II Advocate with the Government of Pakistan to acknowledge women farmers as formal economy workers to ensure that they are – registered and entitled to all benefit from government schemes, as well as a safe, harassment-free, enabling work environment.

III Advocate for the creation of a mechanism to record women's participation in, time spent on, and contributions to the agriculture sector.

IV Organize consultations to review the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 and its implementation mechanism, and suggest improved versions for other provinces.

01

Focus group discussion with women farmers in Goth Bhago Wadadai, Sanghar, Sindh, April 2022.



INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE REVIEW

Violence against women and sexual harassment

Violence against women (VAW) is a human rights violation that affects women and girls around the world in multiple forms. The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as *“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”* Such violence impacts women’s economic, civil, political, legal and social rights. In addition to making women feel unsafe, a lack of physical protection negatively affects their lives, autonomy, livelihoods, living standards and empowerment (OHCHR, 2022).

According to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), ‘violence and harassment’ in the world of work refers to *“a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment.”* The Convention defines ‘gender-based violence and harassment’ as *“violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment”* (ILO, 2019a).

The term ‘sexual harassment’ refers to *“any physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature and other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men, which is unwelcome, unreasonable, and offensive to the recipient”*, including *“conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for the recipient”* (ILO, 2019b).

Violence against women, especially violence perpetrated by family members, is a major challenge in Pakistan. The Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–2018 reports that more than 28 percent of women between 15 and 49 years old have experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Real levels of violence are likely to be higher, as incidents tend to be underreported by survivors due to cultural taboos surrounding discussions of violence, fears of social stigma, gaps in legislation and enforcement, a lack of awareness of relevant laws and women’s rights, and the challenges women face in accessing authorities to report incidents. This trend of underreporting – or a lack of reporting entirely – is also true of incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace.

As in the rest of the world, Pakistani women from all economic and social backgrounds may experience violence and harassment. However, women’s access to education and their capacities to find and use protection-related information can help to protect them from violence. Therefore, it is relevant that literacy rates in Pakistan have been increasing gradually, and the rate of secondary education for girls has risen from 28.6 percent in 2011 to 34.2 percent in 2021 (National Institute of Population Studies, 2018).

This highlights the need for adult literacy programmes for women farmers.

Women in agriculture

Women account for 49 percent of Pakistan's population of 228 million (World Population Review, 2022) and more than half of the country's population lives in rural areas. Nearly 67 percent of women in rural areas work in the agriculture sector, largely on family farms, and the vast majority of their time and labour is unpaid (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). A time use survey by the Ministry of Finance reveals that women in rural areas spend more hours per day on productive activities than men (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Agriculture is the backbone and largest sector of Pakistan's economy, which contributes about 24 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and accounts for half of the country's employed labour force (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019). While women in rural Pakistan engage in all aspects of agricultural work, their contributions to the national economy are largely unrecognized and uncounted (Imran, 2017). Despite the important and varied roles that women play in agriculture, most women farmers do not own the land they work on, do not receive equal wages for work of equal value, and are particularly vulnerable to a range of protection challenges – such as harassment, economic exploitation, physical and psychological abuse. Women in agriculture are especially affected by two major kinds of gender gaps: unequal access to productive resources relative to men, and insufficient information about the roles and resources of women and men in the agriculture sector.

Rural women also experience challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition (Ali et al., 2020) in addition to a double burden of work – as they are expected to work on farms in addition to bearing primary responsibility for domestic care work, including child care (CARE and CFS, 2020).

Social protection systems in Pakistan have not been able to reach all vulnerable rural women to ensure their access to social safety nets and health systems (Benazir Income Support Programme, 2011).

Protection issues

Throughout this study, 'protection issues' in agriculture are understood to mean an environment where women are vulnerable to harm – including violence, harassment and discrimination – when carrying out agricultural and farming activities. Addressing the protection issues faced by women, therefore, means addressing violence and harassment, and keeping women safe from harm.

In many parts of the world, sexual harassment is foremost among the protection issues faced by women in agriculture (Imran, 2017). For instance, an estimated 25 percent of women farm workers in the United States of America have reported crimes related to sexual harassment (La Cooperative Campesina de California, 2020). In Pakistan, protection issues facing women farmers remain little known and poorly documented (Howard, 2019). As such, they have not yet been addressed by policymaking in a systemic manner.

Data collection is an essential, well-recognized tool for identifying the prevalence of gender-related protection issues and finding solutions. The World Bank (2021) highlights how data collection efforts around the world are shedding light on violence against women and leading to solutions. Research on protection issues faced by women is relevant in Pakistan, women's and girls' Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.464 in 2018, compared to an HDI value of 0.622 for men and boys, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI) value of 0.747. The country ranks 153rd of 156 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2021. The index estimates that Pakistan's gender gap widened by 0.7 percentage points, rising to 55.6 percent, between 2020 and 2021.

Pakistan is among the bottom 10 countries in two of the Global Gender Gap Index's four sub-indices, including economic participation and opportunity (152nd), and health and survival (153rd). As of 2021, Pakistan had closed 31.6 percent of the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity.

Women's labour force participation in Pakistan (22.6 percent) remains low, particularly in managerial positions (4.9 percent). This means that only 26.7 percent and 5.2 percent, respectively, of these gaps have been closed, leading to large income disparities between women and men. On average, a Pakistani woman's income is 16.3 percent of a man's income (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Gender-based inequalities also exist in access to justice, land ownership, non-financial assets, inheritance rights and access to credit. On a positive note, the Global Gender Gap Index records an improvement in the share of women engaged in professional and technical roles (25.3 percent in 2021, up from 23.4 percent in 2020) (WEF, 2021). Other protection issues affect women's mobility, well-being and access to employment opportunities, such as harassment on public transport. According to the Asian Development Bank (2014), 70 percent of Pakistani women who use public transport have faced harassment, 75 percent of whom are harassed by other passengers, 20 percent by conductors and 5 percent by drivers. In addition, 34 percent of women passengers have reported experiencing inappropriate touching or groping, while 7 percent have experienced following or stalking (ADB 2014; Zulfiqar, 2020).

Examining protection issues in Pakistan's agriculture sector is especially important for a number of reasons. As noted above, over half of all Pakistanis live in rural areas, where the vast majority of rural women work as informal economy workers. Overall, an estimated 74 percent of Pakistani women workers are engaged in the agriculture sector (Partridge-Hicks, 2020).

Women farmers in agriculture and allied sectors risk being exposed to harassment or abuse by male farmers, supervisors, contractors, transporters, shopkeepers who buy their produce, landlords and informal local justice system committees, such as *Panchayats*.

Violence against women farmers in the agriculture sector, especially against women from poor and minority communities, has serious consequences (Shaukat 2016). A study by the Aurat Foundation (2018) identifies a range of hazards faced by women and girls working on farms in Punjab – such as physical abuse, a lack of protective gear, exposure to chemicals which may increase risks to their reproductive health, limited information on hazards, and no medical services. Data collected by the Aurat Foundation suggests that 84 percent of women farmers have been harassed at their workplaces or other public places – including public transport – by co-workers, landlords and other men.

Social protection systems are needed to reach out to vulnerable rural women and secure their access to social safety nets and health systems. Most women farmers have limited or no means of communicating their concerns about employment conditions, a situation that poses particular health risks for unpaid family workers due to the rising use of pesticides (Shaukat, 2016).

Despite legislative advancements, awareness of relevant laws remains limited. For instance, the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010 is a major legislative milestone in Pakistan, with its detailed implementation mechanism, including Ombudsperson offices at the federal and provincial levels which receive and address complaints of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, many women workers are unaware of the law and its vitally important redressal mechanism.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY

Goal

This study's overarching goal is to identify gender-related protection issues that impact women farmers in Pakistan, and suggest strategy solutions that can contribute to emergency and resilience strategies to safeguard their rights. The study examines protection issues faced by women in Pakistan's agriculture sector, with a focus on those engaged in the production of four major crops: cotton, maize, wheat and vegetables/fruit. Women in the fisheries and livestock sectors were also interviewed to better understand women's contributions to food systems and climate change resilience.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- Identify the gender-based violence and protection issues that impact women farmers in Pakistan.
- Identify relevant areas where protection services are lacking within work dynamics, policy and legislation and local community systems, and prepare a strategy for the protection of women farmers.
- Contribute to the government's women's empowerment programmes and emergency and resilience strategies, by offering recommendations on developing strategy solutions to address the protection issues faced by women farmers in Pakistan.

Limitations

This study only includes information collected in 2021 and 2022. While the literature review refers to older data, the primary research conducted for this study does not cover data from earlier years.

This is the first study of its kind on protection issues faced by women in Pakistan's agriculture sector. Therefore, it should be treated as a baseline, rather than as a comprehensive study.

Research methodology

In addition to interviewing women farmers in the agriculture sector – as well as many involved in the fisheries and livestock sector – to examine protection issues, this study analyses the linkages between women's livelihoods, nutrition, literacy and child protection issues vis-à-vis rural women's understandings of well-being, protection and economic security.

By analysing these issues, the study seeks to shed light on the kind of policy reforms, technical assistance and departmental coordination required to address protection issues that affect women in agriculture.

Data collection

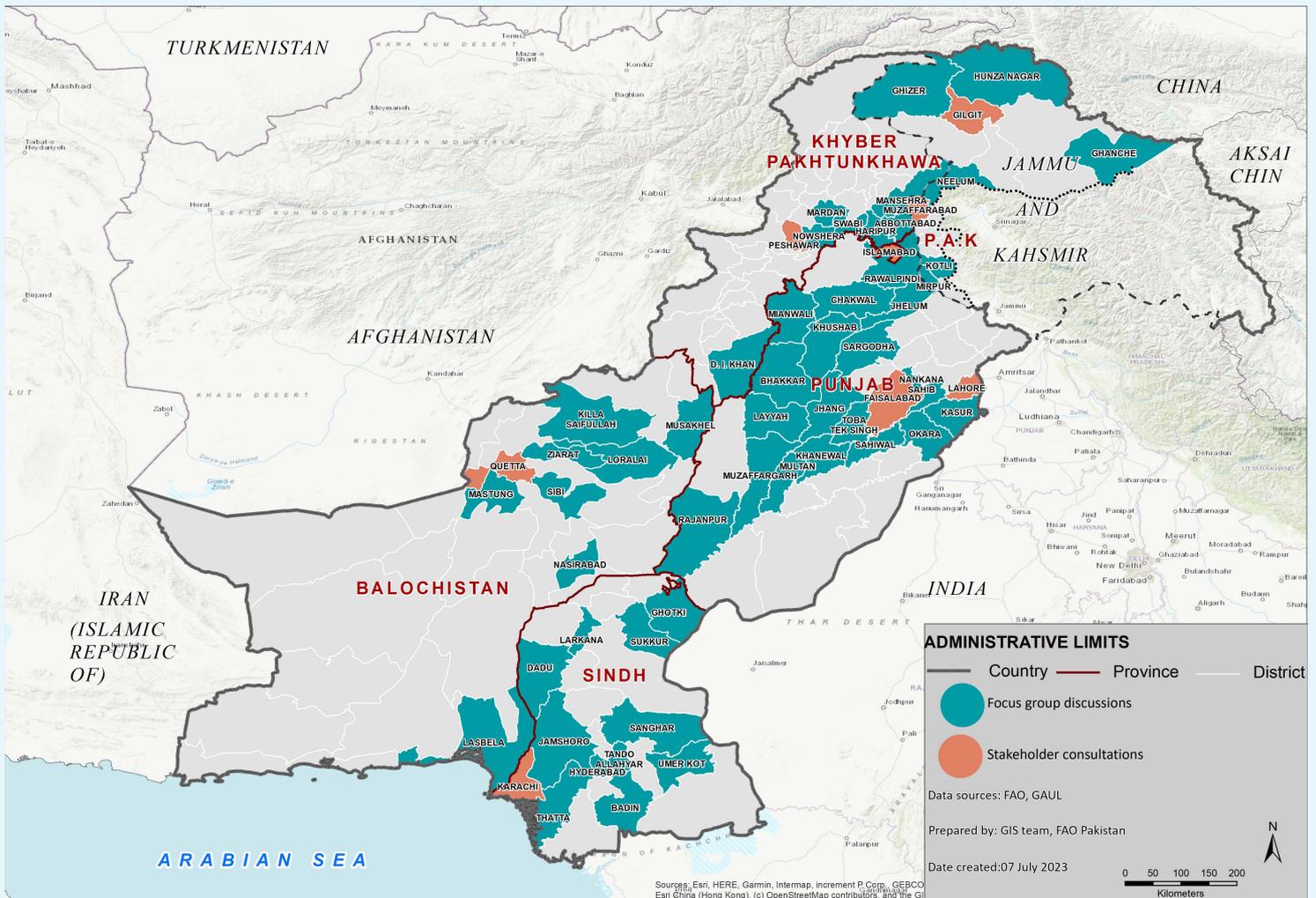
Primary data collection for this study involved:

- **Six stakeholder consultations** – one at the national level and five provincial/regional consultations – with 118 representatives of non-governmental and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs and INGOs) working on agriculture and women's rights-related issues, expert staff from national Departments of Agriculture and Commissions on the Status of Women (CSWs), media professionals, and members of women's leadership networks.

- 49 focus group discussions (FGDs)** with **907 women farmers in 43 districts** across Pakistan. Held between February and May 2022, these interactive dialogues were held in different locations to ensure wide geographical coverage, as well as a broad understanding of working conditions across agricultural sub-sectors related to the

production of four major agricultural crops discussed above.

- 630 survey questionnaires** completed by women farmers from all of Pakistan’s four provinces, as well as the regions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan.



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the map does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on map represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

To select focus group participants, this study used a 'purposeful sampling' method. Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique that utilizes specific criteria or purposes to select a particular sample. The basic principle of purposeful sampling is that information is available, and researchers must identify what segment of the population can provide this information. Therefore, members of the PODA Rural Women Leadership Alliance were engaged to invite local women farmers and farmworkers to participate in the focus group discussions in different parts of Pakistan. In the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, FAO sub-national offices helped PODA organize focus groups with women farmers with whom FAO works.

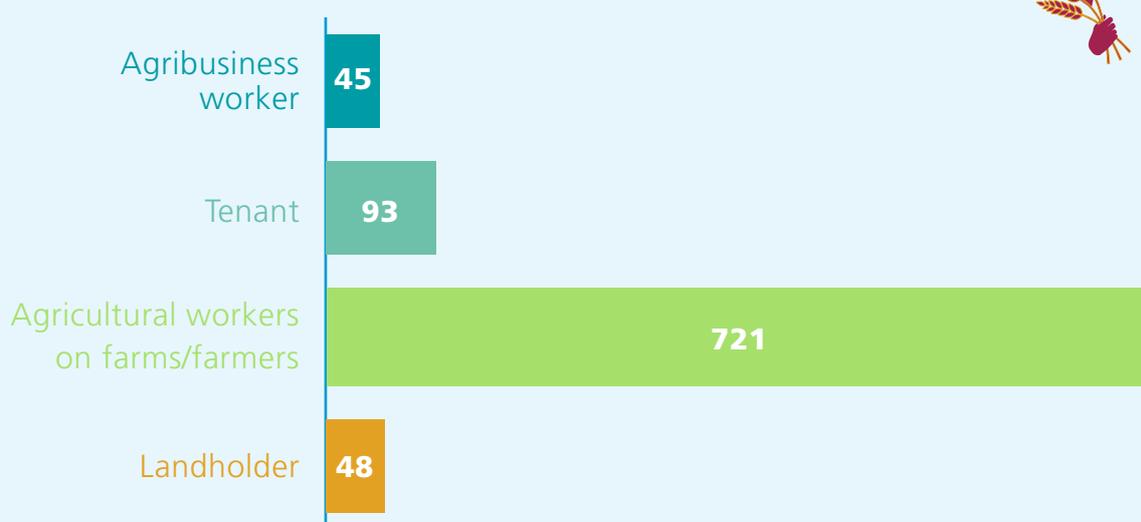
The criteria used to select focus group participants were: (a) all participants had to be female agriculture workers, (b) aged 18 or older, and (c) with at least two years of work experience in the agriculture sector.

In larger districts, more than one focus group discussion was held.

The participants' occupations and circumstances varied from province to province. In Punjab, most participants are daily wage workers hired by contractors. In Sindh, participants are locally known as Haris; they too do not own land and instead work on land owned by others, often in debt bondage. In Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), participants are either workers engaged on family farms, tenants or farmworkers. In Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), most participants work on family farms.

Overall, 721 focus group participants (79 percent) are agricultural workers on farms/farmers, 93 (10 percent) are tenants, 45 (4 percent) are engaged in agribusinesses and 48 (5 percent) are small landholders. All participants were either working at the time of the study's development, or had previously worked in agriculture.

Figure 2 | Focus group participants, disaggregated by type (n = 907)



Source: Focus group discussions.



The average age of participants is 41, with ages ranging from 15 to 68 years old. In total, only 114 participants (11.4 percent) have completed at least their primary education. While 674 participants (74 percent) are married, 117 (12.8 percent) are widows, 63 (6.9 percent) are unmarried and 53 (6.3 percent) are divorced. In terms of religion, 578 participants (63.7 percent) identified themselves as Muslims, 273 participants (30 percent) as Hindus and 56 participants (6.17 percent) as Christians.

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the findings of the focus group discussions.

Stakeholder consultations

To inform this study, a series of consultations were held with key stakeholders – ranging from representatives of government offices to academics and subject matter experts, including farmers. These consultations posed three key questions to participants:

- What are gender-based violence and protection issues impact women farmers in Pakistan?
- What areas of work dynamics, policy, legislation and local community systems require reform in order to ensure the protection of women in agriculture?
- What safeguards need to be introduced by the government to ensure an enabling, safe and progressive work environment for women in agriculture?

Annex 3 presents detailed information on the participants and issues discussed during the stakeholder consultations organized for this study.

Questionnaire-based data collection

A questionnaire featuring 85 questions was specially developed for this study. First discussed during the stakeholder consultation at FAO's Country Office in Islamabad, the questionnaire was later validated by members of PODA's Rural Women's Network before being finalized.

As noted above, the questionnaire's pilot testing was undertaken in five districts of Punjab – Chakwal, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Sargodha and Toba Tek Singh. The pre-testing process identified questions that were not relevant or were confusing, enabling the questionnaire's revision based on learning from the field. Annex 1 provides information on the data collection forms sent, received and analysed for this study.

The questionnaire was divided into five subsections:

- Basic information: Participants were asked 25 questions about basic characteristics, such as their name, identity, profession and family information.
- Professional information: This section featured questions on participants' profession and work in the field.
- Farm information: Participants were asked 12 questions related to on-farm activities and basic human rights, such as their access to water and land, as well as questions on land ownership, wages and provisions by the government.
- Information about protection against gender-based violence, harassment and abuse: Participants were asked 26 questions on protection issues related to gender-based violence, harassment and sexual abuse faced by women working in the field, as well as questions on child protection and safety.
- Information on issues related to crops and land: Participants were asked six questions related to crops, farm management challenges and recommendations by women farmers.

The questionnaire forms were administered in two ways: face-to-face and on paper.

The study team was split into two groups. While one group conducted a survey in the field – visiting 43 districts to hold focus group discussions and consultations – the other reached out to participants through telephone calls or by mail, explaining the questionnaire forms to respondents, following up with them and receiving completed forms via couriers. The study team also reached out to 65 rural women leaders registered with PODA's Rural Women Leadership Alliance Network based in each of Pakistan's provinces.

Overall, questionnaires were completed by 630 women farmers across 82 districts in Pakistan – including 211 questionnaires received from (South, Central and North) Punjab, 112 from Sindh, 104 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 103 from Balochistan, 50 from Azad Jammu and Kashmir and 50 from Gilgit-Baltistan.

Each completed form included between 70 and 87 responses, which were all recorded in a database. After entering the responses from all 630 forms, the database file was saved on a hard drive as well as in cloud storage.

Using the database, the study team conducted quantitative analysis of the questionnaires – interpreting the data provided, extracting key findings on protection issues and transforming raw data into valuable information.



02

Focus group discussion with women farmers in Luni village, Sibi, Balochistan, March 2022.



KEY FINDINGS

ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The stakeholders consulted identified several protection issues faced by women in agriculture, including:

Work and production-related challenges

- Heavy workloads of between 12 to 18 hours per day.
- A lack of access to independent agricultural production (in terms of access to land, credit, water and technology).
- A lack of training opportunities and access to advisory services.
- A lack of agriculture-related technical education and training.
- A lack of access to transport and marketing mechanisms.
- A lack of access to banking services.
- A lack of land ownership.
- A lack of collective bargaining.
- The gender wage gap which causes women to earn less than men, as well as the lack of a minimum wage.
- Delayed payments by contractors.

- A lack of alternative sources of income generation.

Awareness-related challenges

- A lack of awareness about protection issues.
- A lack of awareness of workers' rights.
- A lack of knowledge about the impacts of climate change.

Challenges related to health, well-being and social norms

- A lack of toilet facilities.
- A lack of access to clean drinking water.
- A lack of basic health facilities.
- Health problems due to the excessive use of sprays and pesticides.
- Mobility restrictions experienced by women.

Challenges related to legislation

- The limited implementation of existing protection laws.

Legal support, protection and oversight

Women farmers in Pakistan tend to lack formal contracts and are often employed on a seasonal basis. Informality, coupled with limited ownership of land or assets, exposes women to the risk of exploitation. For instance, landlords may choose to pay them not in cash but in kind.

Moreover, contractors may give women's earnings to their husbands or male relatives, rather than to women farmers themselves. Informal employment also leaves women more vulnerable to violence and harassment.

Pakistan's labour laws do not cover the agriculture sector and the country lacks a national law to safeguard the rights of women farmers. However, the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 is a legislative milestone that other provinces can replicate. The law recognizes women working in agriculture as formal workers, protects their right to social security and safeguards the rights of women workers involved in cultivation, fisheries, poultry and animal husbandry.

The stakeholder consultations also highlight that, although national legislation is fairly comprehensive in terms of addressing violence against women, gaps and implementation challenges persist. For instance, there have been delays in the creation of systems and mechanisms to enable the legal framework to function effectively. Similarly, a lack of financial resources and trained personnel pose challenges to the implementation of laws to curb all forms of violence against women.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Overall, the focus group discussions suggest that sexual harassment is frequent and persistent in agricultural workplaces. Focus group participants believe that both women workers and children are not safe in the fields. The participants expressed a general sense of insecurity – 735 of the 907 participants (81 percent) do not feel safe travelling alone for work, while 789 (86.9 percent) do not feel safe while working alone in the fields.

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“We feel insecure while working on the farms because most of the time, there is no man with us in the fields. Male passersby gaze at us and sometimes they whistle.”

– Focus group participant,
Dera Ismail Khan,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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“Children are easy targets for perpetrators because they are unaware of what is happening to them, so incidents go unreported.”

– Focus group participant,
Dera Ismail Khan,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Mobility restrictions, as well as a lack of sanitation and child care facilities are also major challenges. All of the participants (100 percent) reported the absence of toilet facilities in the field, while 673 participants (74 percent) experience restricted or limited mobility and have very little involvement in the sale or purchase of agricultural products. The focus groups also reveal a lack of awareness among women farmers about their rights as Pakistani citizens, labour rights and human rights in general.

For instance, 779 participants (85 percent) reported lacking information or knowledge about laws to protect women from discrimination and most are unaware of redressal mechanisms.

The key findings of the focus group discussions include:

1. Women farmers are often exposed to hostile working environments – including exposure to violence, harassment and verbal abuse, particularly while working in the fields.
2. Socioeconomic factors increase women’s risk of exposure to violence and harassment in the agriculture sector.
3. Women farmers are not clear about how to define gender-based violence or harassment in the workplace.
4. A lack of awareness of laws, reporting procedures and redressal mechanisms, coupled with personal fears – such as the fear of losing their livelihoods – cultural and economic pressures and a lack of support prevent women farmers from reporting incidents of violence and harassment to the authorities. .
5. Departments of Agriculture and Labour do not monitor the working conditions of women farmers, and addressing violations of women’s rights in agriculture is not explicitly stated within their mandates. Departmental staff require dedicated gender training on gender-related issues, including tackling the protection issues faced by women farmers.

Limited awareness of workplace violence and harassment

Most focus groups participants (80 percent) displayed a limited understanding of ‘violence and harassment’, believing the phenomena to refer solely to rape or attempted rape.

However, as discussed above, violence and harassment in the world of work encompass any *“unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, [...] that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.”*

Thus, while verbal abuse and insults are forms of violence or harassment according to internationally accepted norms, focus group participants did not consider them to be manifestations of harassment. Only 205 participants (22 percent) understood that inappropriate staring or gazing, unwanted touching, speech containing sexual content, verbal abuse, delayed payment, requests or demands for sexual favours are forms of violence and harassment. Nevertheless, the focus group participants identified verbal abuse and insults by contractors as the most significant problems faced by women workers in agriculture. This challenge was reported by participants across Punjab and Sindh.

Most (830) focus group participants (91 percent) are unaware of existing laws and pathways for reporting violence and harassment. The majority have no knowledge of support services or mechanisms available to help them. This study’s findings reveal that many women farmers (66 percent), especially those living in areas with powerful land owners, do not understand the government’s role in addressing challenges faced by farmers, agricultural workers and rural communities. Respondents highlighted the importance of education to enable marginalized communities to lift themselves out of poverty, including training and awareness raising. One-quarter (25 percent) of respondents recommended providing training to raise awareness of how to protect women from health problems, harassment and violence, while 14 percent underscored the need to address women’s lack of financial resources to strengthen their position in society.

Risk factors for violence and harassment in agriculture

Both personal and environmental risk factors affect women's vulnerability to violence and sexual harassment in the agriculture sector. According to focus group participants, women workers may be forced to tolerate violence or harassment because of their personal socioeconomic circumstances, for instance if they need to work to support their families. The pressure of ensuring their households' economic stability exposes women to working environments that are not women-friendly – such as large, isolated open fields where an attack could go unnoticed. The focus groups highlighted that women workers who travel long distances to work, particularly along isolated paths or roads, are more likely to experience violence or harassment on their way to work.

Overall, women agricultural workers appear reluctant to report incidents of violence or sexual harassment because complaints or noncompliance are likely to have negative consequences for their continued employment, payment or future work. During the focus groups, 754 participants (83 percent) admitted that they do not speak out for fear of losing work, alongside other cultural barriers, such as social stigma, gossip and rumours. For instance, women workers tend to remain silent when contractors and supervisors resort to verbal and physical abuse in a bid to increase productivity or meet seasonal deadlines. This is because they worry that they will be dismissed by supervisors or that their payment will be delayed if they report an incident. According to the participants, non-permanent workers are particularly vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse, as they tend to be hired by contractors and could be fired or not rehired when they complain. The threat of losing their jobs hangs heavy over women workers, acting as a deterrent to reporting.

Reluctance to report incidents of violence and harassment is tied to unequal power relationships in agriculture. Most (814) focus group participants (89.7 percent) work under the supervision of male contractors or male farm managers, and 854 participants (94 percent) reported that they have informal work arrangements with no formal legal contracts. This makes it harder for women to register complaints with employers or landlords.

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“I have to tolerate everything because I have to feed my five children. My husband is sick and bedridden. I am the only one [able] to go out and earn an income to fulfil the basic needs of my children and my husband's treatment.”

– Focus group participant,
Muzaffargarh, Punjab

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“I believe violence and harassment happen to women on all the farms, but no one says anything because they want to continue working and earning to support their families.”

– Focus group participant,
Ghotki, Sindh

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“When we arrive home, tired, after a day’s work, we do not get enough time to rest because we have to prepare food [for the family] and feed and take care of the animals.”

– Focus group participant,
Lasbella, Balochistan

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The discussions indicate that seasonal and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable because they depend on employers or contractors for housing and other basic needs. Overall, women workers experience insecurity because employers and supervisors are in a position to exploit, threaten or harm their employment prospects, largely with impunity.

Additional stressors faced by women farmers

Health problems

Most focus group participants (835 participants, i.e. 92 percent) reported experiencing health problems, including 851 (93.8 percent) who reported pesticide-related health problems and 714 (78.8 percent) who suffer from asthma. According to the participants, women farmers do not have access to protective gear, which exposes them to ailments associated with the excessive use of pesticides. Most rural women cannot read warnings printed on pesticide containers.

Moreover, 883 of the 907 participants (97 percent) reported being stressed due to their workloads.

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Women workers not only experience sexual violence and harassment; they also experience physical and psychological violence. Private contractors often also verbally abuse and insult us. When we protest, they delay our payment and sometimes do not give us more work.

– Focus group participant, Kasur,
Punjab

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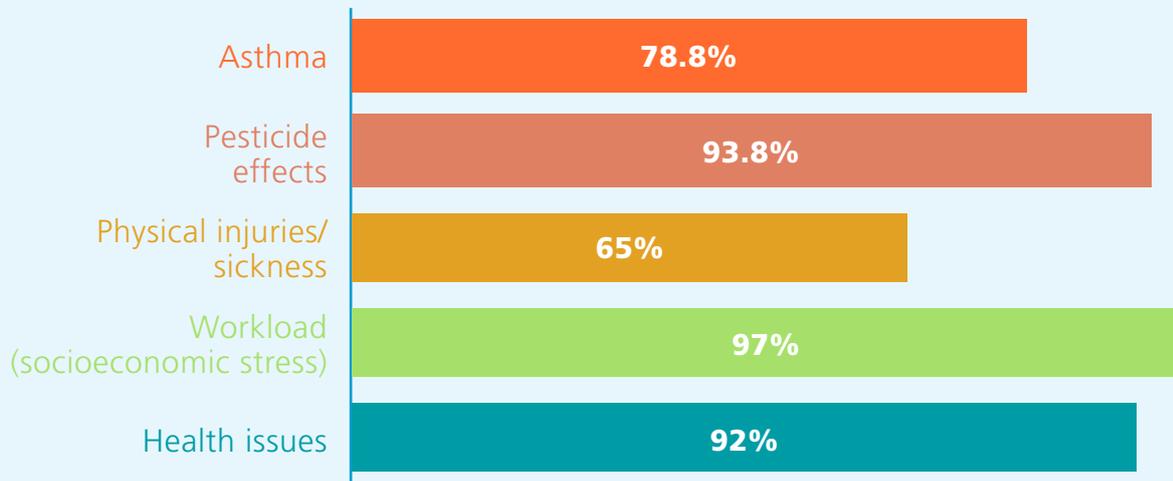
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Harassment occurs in agricultural work and we often do not report incidents because we know the perpetrators are more powerful than us. [...] In the end, we have to be bold and face the consequences of speaking out. Despite many challenges, I have filed complaints with the police to help women.

– Focus group participant, Veeru
Kohlan, Tando Jam, Sindh

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Figure 3 | Health problems experienced by women farmers (n = 907)



Source: Focus group discussions.

They reported bearing a double burden of work due to their gender. In addition to working in the fields, women are also given or choose to take primary responsibility for domestic and care work within the household.

While 595 participants (65 percent) admitted to suffering from physical injuries or illnesses, they also reported being unable to access medical treatment. Overall, the focus groups indicate that women farmers tend to have limited or no access to health facilities.

Child marriage

The focus group discussions reported the persistence of child marriage, with girls particularly likely to marry before the age of 18. In some areas, the practice of ‘exchange marriage’ (*watta satta*) remains common – the marriage of a brother-sister pair from two households. In some areas, families may promise to marry off a daughter or son born in the future.

Girls as young as 10 are expected to help the family they live with, whether they remain with their parents or whether they live in a joint family system with their in-laws after marriage. The minimum age for marriage for girls in Pakistan is 16 years old, except for the province of Sindh, where the minimum age has been raised to 18. For boys, the minimum age for marriage is 18 years old nationwide. Despite minimum age requirements, child marriage remains a major challenge – particularly for underage girls – and efforts to punish violations by parents or relatives are insufficient. According to the focus group participants, younger women are more vulnerable to being subjected to domestic violence, excessive work and sexual harassment.

Social protection programmes for rural women

Several focus group participants have registered for Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) cash transfers/the Ehsaas Programme – Pakistan’s flagship federal poverty reduction programme. However, a number of participants reported that they have not yet received payments, while others indicated that local distributors deduct an amount from the payments they receive. Participants also reported that their husbands take the money provided to them through BISP cash transfers.

Very few focus group participants have Kissan Cards – a major initiative to support Pakistan’s small-scale farmers through government subsidies. Only 34 participants (fewer than 4 percent) have registered – 25 women farmers in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and nine in Khanewal, Punjab. This may be due to the fact that Kissan Cards are only available to farmers who own their own land, which most women farmers in Pakistan do not.

Provincial variations

Focus group discussions in different parts of the country reveal variations in the protection issues faced by women farmers. For instance, cases of violence against women increase during the summer (March to October) in Punjab, as discussed above, in line with the data recorded by the Violence against Women Centre in Multan. In Tharparkar, Sindh, participants reported cases of girls who have survived abuse but have not been taken to a hospital by their parents for fear of social stigma.

Restrictive social norms also impact women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in different ways. For example, the focus group discussion in Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, revealed that women are only allowed to work in tobacco fields at night, rather than during the day, due to social norms and safety concerns.

Participants in Swabi reported being unable to leave the home without a male relative due to norms that seek to restrict their interaction with ‘unrelated men’, as well as their fear of social stigma and harassment. In Balochistan, participants reported that women are not allowed to leave the home without their husband’s permission.

In Sindh, women farmers (most of whom are Haris) tend to work for landlords for several generations. They fear being faced with social and economic exclusion and the non-payment of wages by influential landlords. In Balochistan, some farmers face expulsion from the fields where they have worked for generations.

Participants cited a lack of sanitation facilities as a major challenge, such as in the vicinity of Lake Manchar in Dadu, Sindh, where open defecation is commonly practised.

Figure 4 | Key constraints faced by women farmers

Men's perceptions of women in agriculture

During the focus group discussions with women farmers and farmworkers, the study team also interviewed local men to learn about their views on women farmers' role in agriculture and protection issues. Male respondents' views varied between locations and across cultures. Overall, while men and women have different perceptions about women's role in agriculture, they tend to agree about the types of activities in which women are most likely to participate. In general, male respondents consider that women play a 'smaller' role in agriculture than men. Moreover, social norms influence men's perceptions of women's participation in decision-making and underlie most of their views.

In **Punjab**, most male respondents believe that women have long been actively involved in agricultural production and are major contributors to livestock care and management. Most consider that women farmers' role is "very important" and that they work "as much as men."

However, other respondents claim that 'hard work' in agriculture is performed solely by men, including operating farm machinery, irrigating crops and preparing land for cultivation. They also believe that it would be impossible for women to go the market to purchase seeds or fertilizer, or to sell produce.

Most respondents were reluctant to discuss protection issues faced by women farmers.

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“In recent years women have become more involved and more likely to take active and equal roles on farms. Thus, they are increasingly doing tasks that have been associated with male farmworkers. But women are not paid as much as men are.”

– Male respondent, Sahiwal, Punjab

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I cannot read or write. I did not know that my landlord added big amounts and the delivery of grains to my name as debt to him. After few years, I learned that I now owe him a big amount, so the women in my family are working at his farm, but he does not paying us any wages for [this] labour.

– Male respondent, Umerkot, Sindh

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They indicated that concerns usually arise when women work under a contractor (*thekedar*) who may exploit them by withholding wages.

In the districts of Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur, respondents complained that their women relatives are treated worse than women members of their landlords’ households. They reported instances of landlords abusing or humiliating women farmers in front of their children. However, women do not tend to complain of harassment to their male relatives, largely because they are not empowered, are unaware of their rights, and do not know how to express or report incidents.

Male respondents in Punjab are not willing to extend property rights to their daughters or sisters, reporting that they will, or have already, paid an equivalent amount for their female relatives’ weddings.

Most respondents interviewed in **Sindh** are either small-scale subsistence farmers or tenants. They report women’s involvement in crop

production – from sowing through to harvesting – as well as in livestock care and management, and domestic work. According to these respondents, many families have been forced to migrate from rural areas to nearby cities to avoid exploitation by local landlords. As a result, women’s role in on-farm and off-farm activities has increased significantly, with a corresponding increase in their workloads and responsibilities.

Respondents in Sindh report that contractors do not pay women and men equally, leading to vastly different daily wage rates and working hours. They consider that women farmers have poor technical skills and lack access to farm machinery, tools, protective gear or health insurance. They believe that, from generation to generation, their households are becoming informal bonded labourers.

Most male respondents interviewed in **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** are unwilling to accept women’s role in agriculture, believing that women’s agricultural work goes against their culture and social norms.

In Pashtun culture, when women go to nearby fields to collect firewood and animal feed, no one is supposed to look at them. In districts where women are involved in vegetable farming, men are technically not allowed to enter their fields. In Swabi, some women are obliged to work on family farms at night so that they are not observed working in the fields. The field visits conducted for this study revealed that Afghan refugee women are engaged as farmworkers in many parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, usually alongside their families, and always fully veiled (purdah).

In **Balochistan**, male respondents in the Pashtun belt expressed views similar to those of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They believe women should not leave the home to earn a living. These respondents reported women's involvement in non-agricultural and non-livestock-related income generation activities – such as embroidery, rug manufacturing, knitting, wool spinning and shearing, and processing edible products – which they do not consider to be 'agricultural work'.

Respondents in Baloch communities reported women's involvement in agriculture, including the care and management of small ruminants. They noted that women are also responsible for weeding, seed cleaning, drying and storing crops.

According to respondents in the district of Kalat, Balochistan, women assist men in the production of medicinal plants used to treat ailments such as fever, liver disease, diabetes, indigestion, birth-related problems and childcare. In the district of Khuzdar, women work side-by-side their family male members in value added agricultural production, such as making jam, jelly and tomato ketchup.

Respondents in Balochistan's district of Nasirabad, which borders the province of Sindh, reported that women are major contributors to cotton-picking tasks. Women pick cotton for between two and three months per year in extremely hot weather. Exposure to toxic

chemicals used on cotton crops causes serious health problems for women in the district. According to the male respondents interviewed in the district, agricultural information is rarely provided to women farmers, and they rarely have opportunities for agricultural training. One community mobilizer interviewed noted that women mostly work on land owned by men. Men sell the harvest and enjoy a far stronger socioeconomic standing than women. Moreover, women tend not to be consulted in terms of decision-making or about issues related to health, education and marriage.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Findings from Punjab

Punjab's overall literacy rate is fairly low (66.1 percent) with a clear gender divide favouring men. While the average literacy rate among men and boys in the province is 74.3 percent, the literacy rate among women and girls is 58.1 percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Nevertheless, like rates across Pakistan, literacy rates in Punjab are improving, according to the Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2020–21. The rate of secondary education for girls rose from 28.6 percent in 2011 to 34.2 percent in 2021, as noted above, although access to education remains a major challenge for girls in rural areas.

Livelihoods in rural Punjab are heavily dependent on agriculture, as the province accounts for the largest share of agricultural production in Pakistan (Government of the Punjab, 2019). Crops grown in the province include cotton, wheat, sugarcane, pulses, fodder and vegetables, as well as fruit crops, most notably citrus and mangoes. Livestock is the single largest agricultural sub-sector, which contributes 53 percent of total agricultural value added.

According to field work by PODA, rural women in the province are largely responsible for livestock rearing and field preparation, including hoeing. During the harvest season, when shortages of agricultural labour occur, women actively participate in harvesting wheat and cotton. They also perform most activities involved in the production of fruit and vegetables, such as picking, cleaning, washing and packing produce.

Basic information

Over half (55 percent) of the questionnaire respondents in Punjab have never been to school. Approximately 18 percent only have a primary level of education, 16 percent have completed high school and 11 percent are college graduates.

While 23 percent of respondents in Punjab have access to toilet facilities where they work, they reported that these are not hygienic or gender-segregated. The remaining 77 percent have no access to toilets, obliging them to either travel home or resort to open defecation.

The vast majority of respondents in Punjab (92 percent) also reported lacking access to government health insurance schemes themselves, as well as for their children and dependants. Polio vaccinations are the only health facility reported by questionnaire respondents in the province, who indicated that facilities are not available near their homes to treat other illnesses. When respondents fall ill, a major proportion of their household income is spent on medicines and treatment, negatively affecting their ability to cover other basic needs.

Just over half of respondents in Punjab (57 percent) have access to fresh water, usually supplied through canal irrigation and tube wells. The remaining 43 percent reported facing severe difficulties in accessing clean water from different sources.

Professional and farm-related information

In terms of agricultural occupations, 40 percent of respondents in Punjab are involved in harvesting wheat, 23 percent in raising livestock, 15 percent in seeding and planting – usually by hand – and 12 percent in cotton picking. The latter reported suffering from health problems, including respiratory issues and skin allergies.

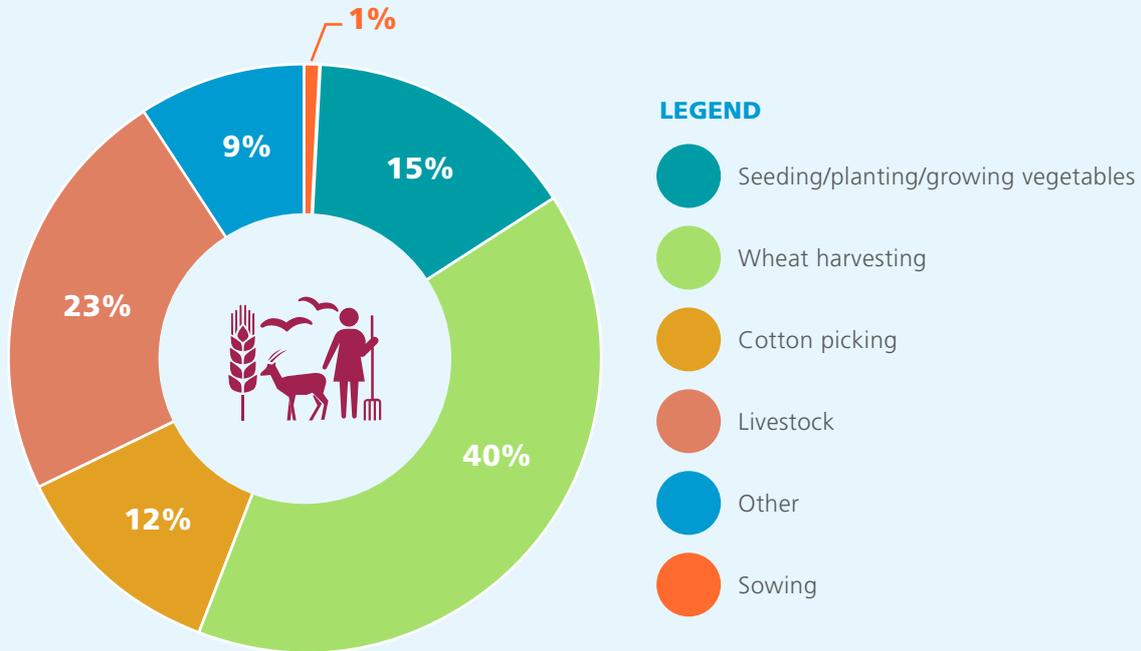
Most women agricultural workers in Punjab work on land owned by others and appear to lack an understanding of formal written contracts, minimum wages, social security or welfare benefits, such as child health benefits, maternity leave, and access to government subsidies and credit. This lack of awareness is apparent in responses to the survey questionnaire, as just 11 percent of respondents reported having read their contracts, while 89 percent have not.

Most respondents in Punjab (68 percent) take lunch breaks of between 30 and 90 minutes, during which time they tend to return home to feed their children or perform household chores. The remaining 32 percent of respondents reported having no concept of taking a break during working hours. This suggests that a high proportion of women involved in agriculture are unaware of basic labour rights.

Responses to the survey questionnaire indicate male heads of households tend to control women's financial assets. In Punjab, 66 percent of respondents receive payments themselves, while the rest reported that their husbands (31 percent) or contractors (3 percent) receive their pay.

Respondents in Punjab usually work within a 1 to 4 kilometre radius of their homes. Most (88 percent) walk to work, accompanied by male relatives or in groups with other women workers. The other 12 percent use public transport, which they describe as inefficient, inconvenient and often delayed.

Figure 5 | Women’s agricultural occupations in Punjab



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Protection issues

While 45 percent of respondents of Punjab reported being aware of, or having experienced, harassment-related issues, the other 55 percent indicated that they are not aware of such issues.

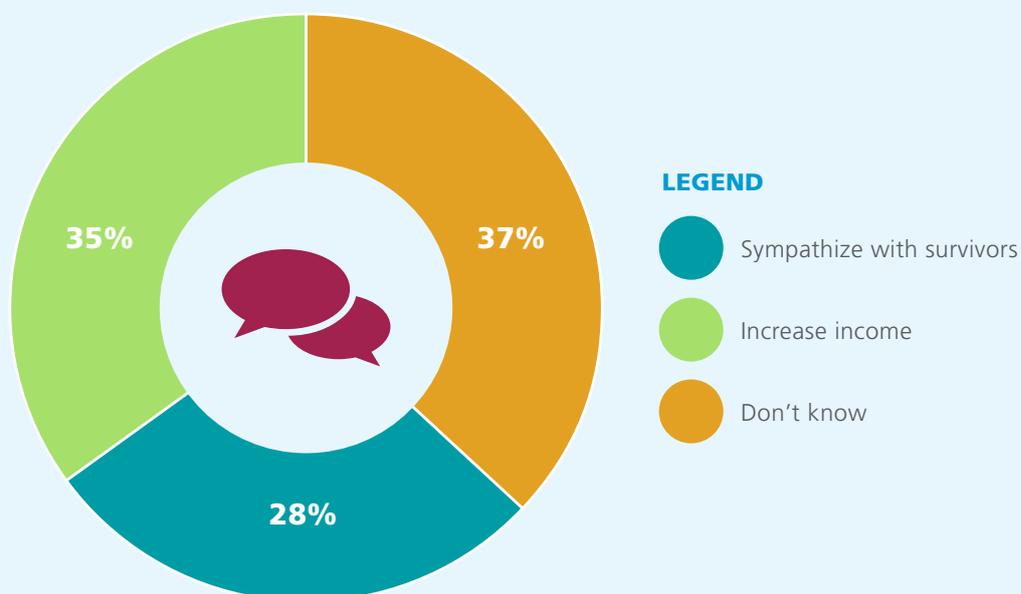
More than half of the respondents in Punjab (53 percent) do not understand the meaning of the term ‘harassment’, while 47 percent do and reported the existence of verbal and physical harassment in the field.

The vast majority of respondents in Punjab (75 percent) are unaware of laws introduced to protect women, while one-quarter (25 percent) are familiar with existing legislation. This lack of awareness is likely a reason why incidents of violence and harassment are rarely reported to the authorities.

Nearly half of the respondents in Punjab (45 percent) feel insecure working in the field, while the rest (55 percent) reported feeling safe. Respondents noted that their sense of insecurity is linked to unequal power relationships, whereby employers, supervisors or other workers are in a position to threaten, exploit, or fire them with impunity.

In terms of women’s perceptions of harassment, 37 percent of respondents admitted not knowing how to react to incidents, 28 percent expressed sympathy with survivors and 35 percent suggested increasing women’s pay to prevent them from experiencing harassment.

Figure 6 | Women farmers' suggestions on how to address workplace harassment in Punjab



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Findings from Sindh

Sindh's overall literacy rate is 61.6 percent, with a considerable gender divide. While the literacy rate among men and boys is 72.5 percent, it is just 49.5 percent among women and girls (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Pakistan's second largest province in terms of population size and economic output, Sindh is largely dependent on agriculture. Key crops include rice, cotton, wheat, sugarcane, mangoes and bananas. Women farmers in Sindh are involved in all stages of crop production – from sowing to harvesting – as well as livestock rearing and allied activities. On average, women in rural Sindh work for 12 to 14 hours per day (FAO, 2015). Their involvement exceeds that of men in crop production, livestock and dairy development, poultry and fisheries. Despite their pivotal role in agriculture, their contributions are under-recognized due to social and cultural norms.

For instance, they tend to be referred to as sharecroppers or helpers, rather than women farmers.

Basic information

Most of the 112 women who responded to the survey questionnaire in Sindh have never been to school (70 percent), 25 percent attended primary school, 4.5 percent attended high school and a single respondent (0.89 percent) is a college graduate.

Almost all (96 percent) respondents in Sindh do not have access to toilet facilities at work. As a result, they are forced to return home to use sanitation facilities and many experience health complications. The remaining 4 percent of respondents reported having access to 'informal toilets'.

Sindh is among the driest provinces in Pakistan, characterized by low levels of rainfall and few sources of fresh water. Among respondents in Sindh, only 31 percent have access to fresh drinking in the field, while 69 percent do not.

Professional and farm-related information

Among respondents in Sindh, 39 percent are involved in seeding, planting and growing vegetables, 17 percent in harvesting wheat, 15 percent in cleaning crops and 5 percent in cotton picking. The remaining 24 percent engage in other activities, such as embroidery.

Most respondents in Sindh (87 percent) reported never signing a formal, written agreement with their landlords or employers, while a minority (13 percent) have signed and read their contracts. The absence of contracts makes it difficult to hold employers to account if they underpay workers.

A large proportion of respondents in Sindh (42 percent) reported not being allowed to take lunch breaks, indicating a breach of their labour rights. The 58 percent who do have lunch breaks usually use this time to return home to feed their children or carry out household chores.

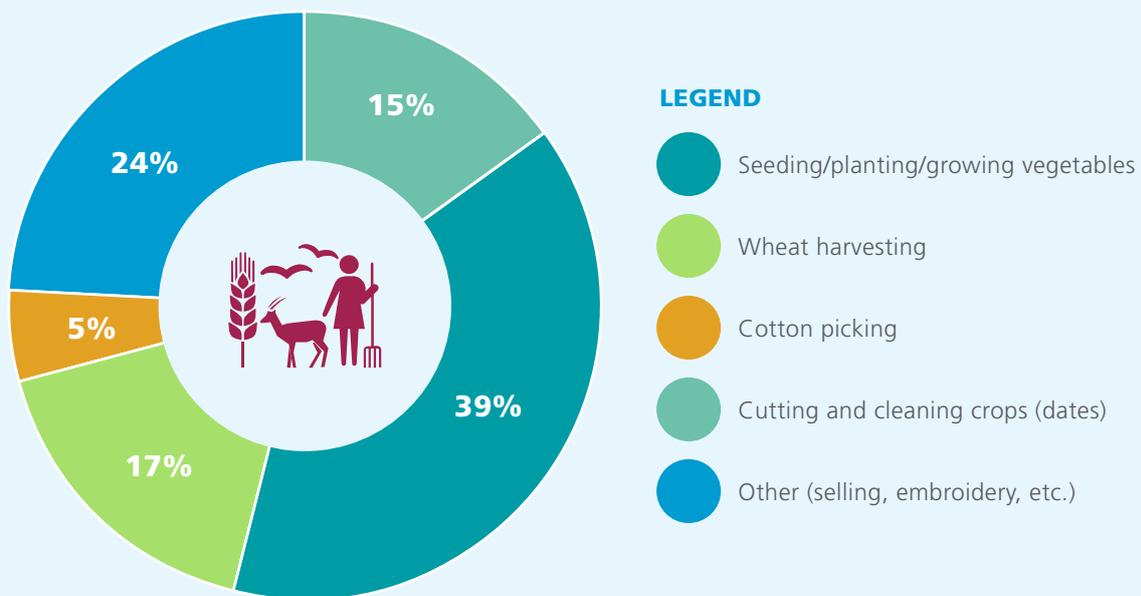
Only 4 percent of respondents receive their pay themselves. For the rest of the respondents in Sindh, their pay is either given to their husbands (92 percent) or contractors (4 percent).

Most respondents in the province (94 percent) walk to work, either because their homes are nearby, or to save money. The 6 percent of respondents who use public transport complained that it is unsafe and inefficient.

Protection issues

Some 55 percent of respondents in Sindh understand the meaning of the term ‘harassment’.

Figure 7 | Women’s agricultural occupations in Sindh



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

The other 45 percent are either unaware of harassment-related issues or hesitated to discuss issues that are considered culturally taboo in rural communities. Similarly, most respondents in the province (90 percent) are unaware of existing laws to protect women, while 10 percent are aware of the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019.

Among respondents in Sindh, 62 percent feel insecure working in the field, while 38 percent do not. Most prefer working in the morning or evening, when temperatures are lower than at mid-day. One-quarter of respondents (25 percent) expressed their willingness to address protection issues, while the rest (75 percent) did not understand the question or provided no response. To address harassment, respondents suggested appointing an agricultural officer in each *mouza*¹ to record and resolve issues faced by women farmers. Respondents highlighted challenges related to a lack of financial resources, due to which they cannot invest in quality seeds or farming equipment, as well as limited awareness of laws on labour rights and human rights.

Findings from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's has an overall literacy rate of 52.4 percent with a marked disparity in literacy rates among men (70.1 percent) and women (35.5 percent) (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Total enrolment in all schools in the province's Settled Districts² in 2020-2021 – public schools, private schools and religious seminaries (*deeni madaris*) – was 61 percent for boys and 39 percent for girls in 2020–21 (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2021).

¹ In Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of India, a *mouza* is a type of administrative district, corresponding to a specific land area within which there may be one or more settlements.

² In 2018, the 25th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan merged the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These areas are now known as the 'Newly Merged Districts', whereas all of the districts in the province before the merger are referred to as the 'Settled Districts'.

Commercial agriculture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is heavily male-dominated. Women's access to and control over productive resources is limited across the province. Their access to public resources and markets is also restricted by a lack of skills, limited work opportunities and socio-cultural norms. Women play an important, but largely unpaid, role in contributing to household income through home-based work. They tend to be engaged in husking and preserving agricultural produce, as well as in rearing and caring for livestock.

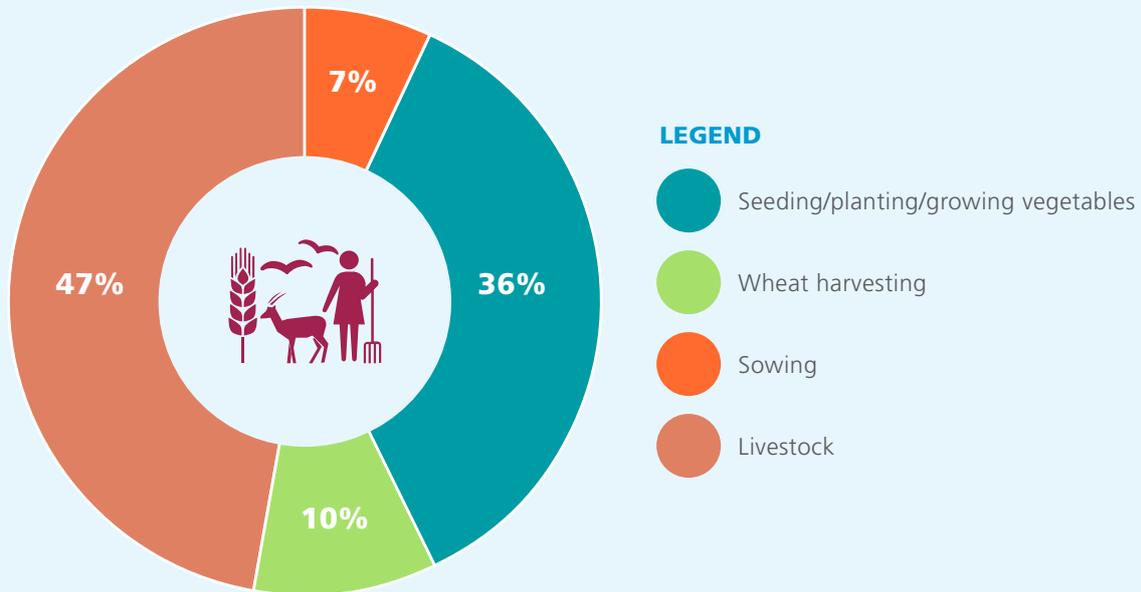
Basic information

Responses to the questionnaire in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reflect low levels of women's education. Only four respondents have graduated from college, eight attended high school, ten only have a primary level of education and 80 have never been to school.

While 59 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have access to a toilet facility, very few reported having access to gender-segregated toilets. The remaining 41 percent reported lacking access to toilet facilities and facing extreme difficulty in finding enclosed facilities.

Just 5 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have easy access to a fresh water source in the field, while 95 percent do not. These women must carry water long distances for their animals to drink and to irrigate crops. This exacerbates women's time poverty by increasing the time they spend on unpaid care work.

Figure 8 | Women’s agricultural occupations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Professional and farm-related information

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s terrain ranges from rugged to mountainous, hilly areas with fertile soil ideal for farming. Among the women who responded to this study’s survey questionnaire in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 47 percent engage in raising livestock, including goats and cattle. Most of these respondents are also responsible for preparing fodder. Around 36 percent of respondents are involved in growing vegetables, usually through kitchen gardening, while 10 percent are involved in the seasonal harvesting of wheat.

While 21 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have signed contracts, many have not been able to read fully them. Half of the respondents (50 percent) do not have or have not read a formal written contract, while 29 percent provided no response to this question.

Most respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (78 percent) take lunch breaks, which they usually use to return home and feed their children or perform household chores. The remaining 22 percent do not take lunch breaks. A number of respondents work for less than 6 hours per day and return home immediately after work.

The wages of more than half of the respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are either paid to their husbands (48 percent) or parents (9 percent), while fewer than half (43 percent) receive payments themselves.

To travel to work, most respondents (78 percent) either walk with male family members or walk together in groups. The 22 percent of respondents who use public transport reported insufficient spaces, delays and verbal harassment.

Protection issues

Among respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 38 percent can define the term 'harassment', while 62 percent reported being unaware of harassment-related issues. Most respondents (89 percent) are unaware of laws for the protection of women, while a minority (11 percent) are aware of existing government initiatives and laws.

Approximately 35 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa feel insecure when working alone, principally due to men staring or harassing them. The other 65 percent reported feeling secure when they work in groups or close to home. This suggests that women who work or travel alone in the province are more likely to experience harassment.

Roughly 20 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reported being willing to take a stand against harassment, while 80 percent did not.

Findings from Balochistan

Balochistan's overall literacy rate is low, at 53.9 percent, with a significant gender divide in literacy – while the literacy rate among men and boys in Balochistan is 70.7 percent, it is just 32.7 percent among women and girls (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Like most part of Pakistan, women are involved in almost every sphere of life in Balochistan. Their participation is particularly pronounced in agriculture. Overall, women tend to be solely responsible for weeding, seed cleaning, drying and crop storage. All these activities are cumbersome, demanding repetitive manual effort. Women are also solely responsible for cleaning their homes, fetching drinking water, cooking, laundry, providing child care, and tailoring, among other activities. Men dominate in activities such as land preparation, threshing, marketing and transport (FAO, 2015).

Cotton picking is another key task performed by women in Balochistan, usually for two to three months per year, as noted above. Cotton-picking often involves prolonged exposure to toxic chemicals in pesticides, which poses serious health risks. Symptoms reported by women farmers include sneezing, muscular pain, dizziness, nausea, burning skin, itching, cough, headaches, blisters and suffocation.

Basic information

Roughly half (50 percent) of the women in Balochistan who completed this study's questionnaire had never been to school. Only 19 percent had attended secondary school, while 7 percent were graduates. Many were home-schooled in Quranic learning.

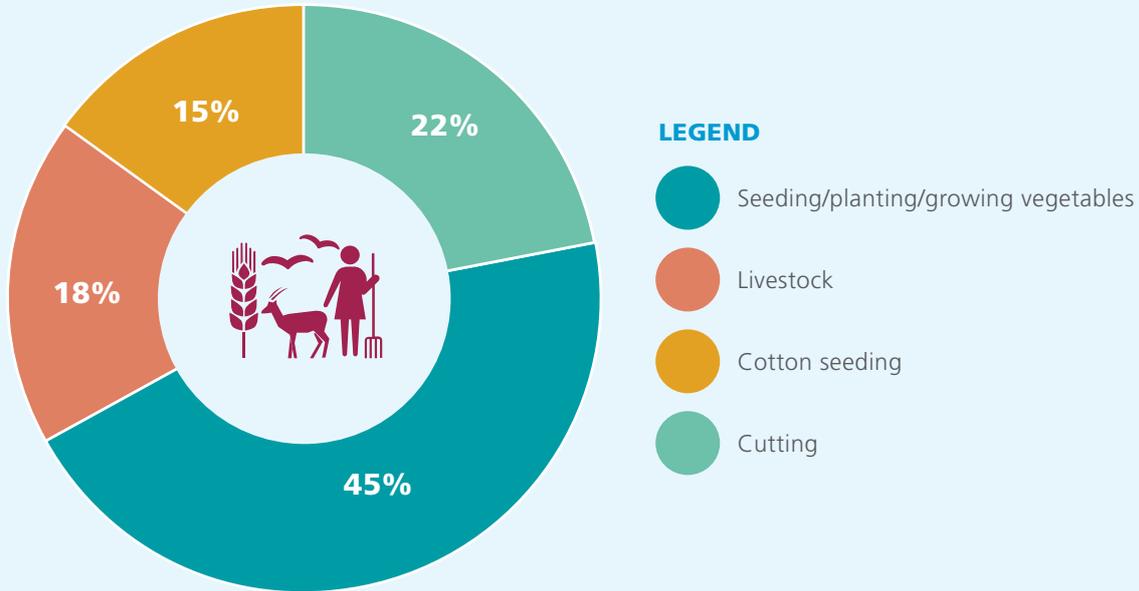
Just 4 percent of questionnaire respondents in Balochistan reported having access to a toilet facility in the field, while the remaining 96 percent lacked access to any kind of toilet facility.

Given Balochistan's arid climate, groundwater is an important but very limited a source of irrigation. Overall, 14 percent of respondents in Balochistan reported having access to fresh water in the field, while 86 percent do not.

Professional and farm-related information

Planting seeds and vegetables is the principal agricultural occupation of respondents in Balochistan (45 percent), while 22 percent are hired for harvesting, 15 percent worked in cotton fields and 18 percent raise livestock, including goats, sheep and cattle.

Figure 9 | Women’s agricultural occupations in Balochistan



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Most respondents in Balochistan (91 percent) provided no response when asked if they have read their contracts, apparently because no concept exists of formal written contracts for agricultural work. Just 9 percent of respondents revealed that they have signed a contract without reading it.

Around 71 percent of respondents in Balochistan are allowed lunch breaks when they work in the field for more than 8 hours per day. The remaining 29 percent reported not being allowed to leave the field during working hours.

While 14 percent of respondents in Balochistan receive their wages themselves, they noted that they are not financially independent. Over half (54 percent) of the respondents reported that their payments are received and controlled by their husbands, who run their households.

While 10 percent of respondents use public transport to get to work, 90 percent walk to work in groups in order to feel secure. Many respondents complained that public transport is inconvenient, uncomfortable and unavailable in a timely manner.

Protection issues

Many respondents in Balochistan (84 percent) reported being unaware of harassment-related issues, while 16 percent were able to define protection issues faced by women farmers. This may be due to gender norms which prevent women from speaking out against issues such as unequal pay.

Among questionnaire respondents in Balochistan, 4 percent were aware of laws on women’s rights in agriculture, while 96 percent were not.

Some 32 percent of respondents in Balochistan reported feeling unsafe when working alone in the field, largely due to male trespassers. The remaining 68 percent feel secure as they work in groups or close to their homes.

When asked about their experiences of harassment, many respondents in Balochistan reported that harassment-related issues have not occurred. To address harassment, respondents suggested ensuring women's security and access to basic facilities.

Findings from Azad Jammu and Kashmir

The region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has a higher literacy rate (76.6 percent) than most parts of Pakistan, although women's literacy rate in the region (64.9 percent) is lower than the literacy rate among men (88.1 percent) (Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 2018). Women and men perform different roles in the region's rural farm set-up. Women are major contributors to all farm-related activities, particularly crop processing.

The focus group discussions and consultations conducted for this study reveal that women in the region are almost solely responsible for livestock and poultry management, vegetable production – especially kitchen gardening – fetching fodder and water both for livestock and household consumption, and the collection and preparation of wood for fuel.

Basic information

Half (50 percent) of the women who completed the survey questionnaire in Azad Jammu and Kashmir have either attended or completed high school. While 14 percent of respondents have completed at least 14 years of education, 20 percent have never attended school.

Most respondents (72 percent) in the region are married, and many have small children whom they take care of in addition to working.

Another 21 percent combine studying with farm work.

Only 2 percent of respondents reported having access to a toilet facility on the farm where they work – the majority of which are unhygienic and are not gender-segregated. The remaining 98 percent either had to travel home to use sanitation facilities, or resort to open defecation. Open defecation can contribute to health problems, such as urinary tract infections and birth complications, as well as environmental pollution, such as spreading intestinal diseases like cholera when excrement enters canals, rivers or streams.

Just 2 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported the availability of fresh drinking water in the fields where they work. The remaining 98 percent either travel long distances to a water source, or carry water with them in plastic bottles, which increases the risk of plastic pollution.

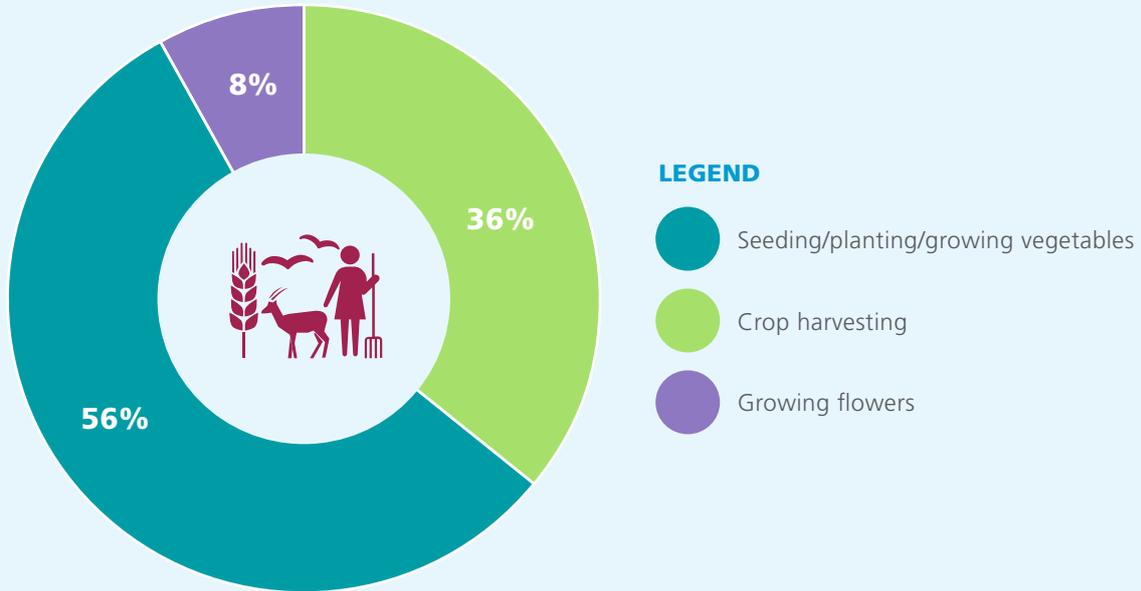
Professional and farm-related information

Over half (56 percent) of the women who completed questionnaires in the region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir are engaged in seeding, planting and growing vegetables. Another 36 percent are involved in crop harvesting, while 8 percent of respondents are engaged in growing flowers.

While 23 percent of respondents admitted that they have not read their work contracts, the remaining 77 percent provided no response to this question. This suggests that most respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir do not have formal written contracts.

Roughly 67 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir either visit home during their lunch break, or use this time to feed their children. The remaining 33 percent are reluctant to take any breaks during working hours.

Figure 10 | Women’s agricultural occupations in Azad Jammu and Kashmir



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Just over half (54 percent) of respondents in the region receive their wages themselves. For 35 percent of respondents, their husbands collect their wages, as do the fathers or brothers of 11 percent of respondents.

Nearly all (96 percent) respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir either walk to work in groups, or are accompanied by male relatives because they live between two and three kilometres from their workplaces, on average. The remaining 4 percent use public transport, which they consider inconvenient due to its limited availability and lack of punctuality.

Protection issues

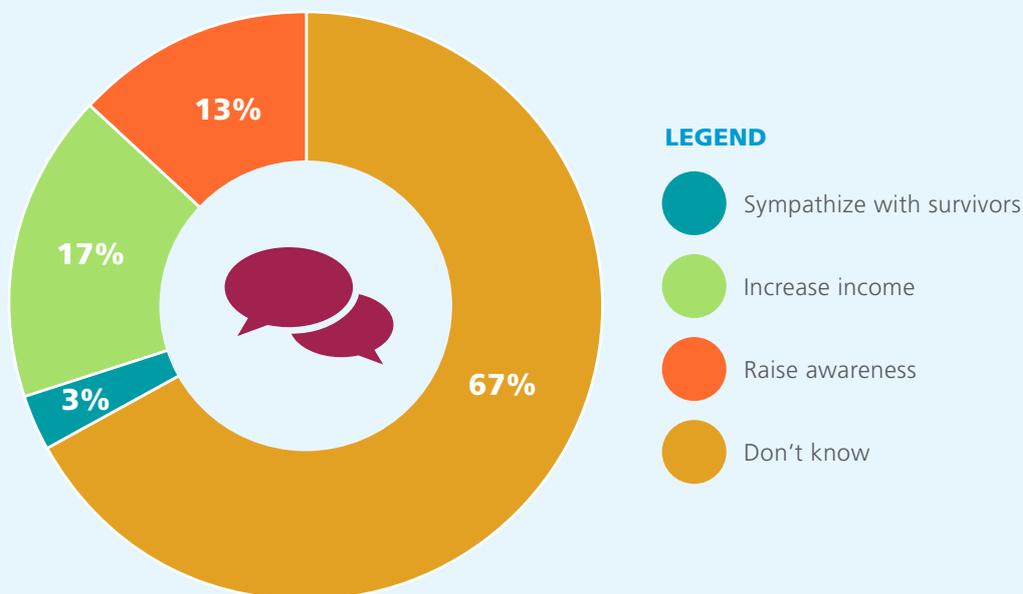
Over half of the women (58 percent) who responded to the questionnaire in Azad Jammu and Kashmir confirmed that they understand the meaning of the term ‘harassment’.

Some anonymously revealed experiences of harassment at home or in the field. The other 42 percent reported being unaware of harassment and related issues. This may be due to social norms which make it difficult for women to discuss such a sensitive topic.

Among questionnaire respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 44 percent are not aware of laws to protect women from harassment. The other 66 percent indicated that they became aware of existing legislation through information sessions or training on the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010. Most (74 percent) respondents in the region reported feeling insecure while travelling to work and working in the field, ostensibly due to a lack of security and coping mechanisms.

While 58 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir expressed their willingness to address protection concerns, 42 percent did not.

Figure 11 | Women farmers' suggestions on how to address workplace harassment in Azad Jammu and Kashmir



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

When asked how issues of harassment in the workplace could be addressed, 42 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir had no suggestions, while the 58 percent suggested increasing pay, raising awareness of sexual misconduct and openly expressing sympathy for survivors.

Findings from Gilgit-Baltistan

There is limited up-to-date data on literacy rates in Gilgit-Baltistan. In 2017, the region's overall literacy rate was estimated at 53 percent with a considerable gender divide, as the literacy rate among men (66 percent) was far higher than among women (42 percent) (Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and UNICEF, 2017). Gilgit-Baltistan has a predominantly agro-pastoral economy, as most households in the region are engaged in agriculture.

Major fruits and nuts produced in the region include apricots, apples, grapes, pears, peaches, pomegranates, cherries, mulberries, walnuts and almonds. Women play a significant role in agriculture and allied activities, including crop production, livestock management, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agroforestry and social forestry, among others. Although women are engaged in every aspect of farm work, they are not usually referred to as 'farmers'. While women harvest, process and produce agricultural products, men market produce and manage the overall household income (World Bank, 2010).

Basic information

Among questionnaire respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan, 40 percent have attended secondary school, 27 percent only have a primary level of education and 22 percent have a graduate degree.

Access to sanitation facilities remains a challenge for women agricultural workers in Gilgit-Baltistan, as 82 percent of respondents reported that they do not have access to a toilet facility in the field, compared to 18 percent who do.

While Gilgit-Baltistan is rich in natural resources, including sufficient supplies of fresh water, climate change is putting pressure on water resources. The majority of respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan (81 percent) reported having easy access to fresh water through rivers, streams or canals near the fields they work in. However, 19 per cent lack access to fresh water in the field.

Professional and farm-related information

One-third (33 percent) of respondents are involved in floriculture (cultivating flowers), 8 percent engage in bee keeping given honey's

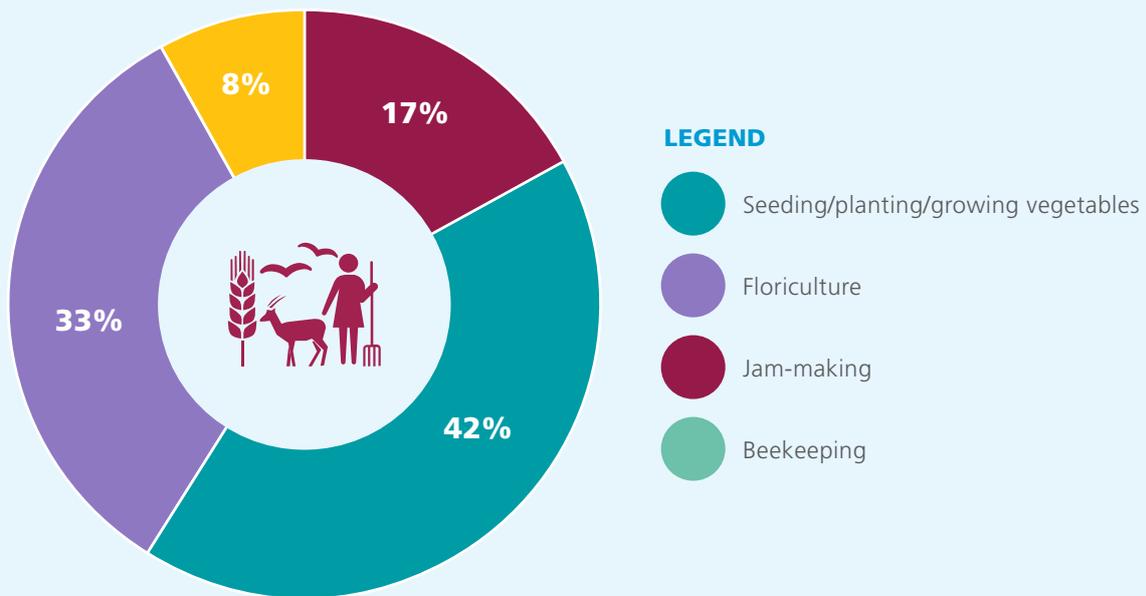
value as a commodity with a long shelf life, and 42 percent that are responsible for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables.

Despite Gilgit-Baltistan's high literacy rate, 80 percent of respondents have not read or signed a formal contract. Of the 2 percent of respondents who have a formal contract, many have not read the contract in detail. Some 18 percent of respondents provided no response.

More than half (53 percent) of the respondents do not take lunch breaks, while 47 percent do.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, 28 percent of questionnaire respondents receive payments themselves and enjoy financial freedom, while 29 percent prefer payments and their households' financial assets to be controlled by their husbands. Approximately 43 percent reported that their pay is received by their fathers or brothers.

Figure 12 | Women's agricultural occupations in Gilgit-Baltistan



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Very few respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan (4 percent) use public transport. The majority (96 percent) walk to work, either with their husbands, in groups of women, or alone, as they feel safe travelling short distances.

Protection issues

Slightly over half (52 percent) of respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan are aware of harassment-related issues. The other 48 percent indicated that they do not understand the term and reported a lack of protection issues in their local area. A similar trend is evident in terms of awareness of laws that protect women. While roughly half of the respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan are aware of these laws, the other half are not.

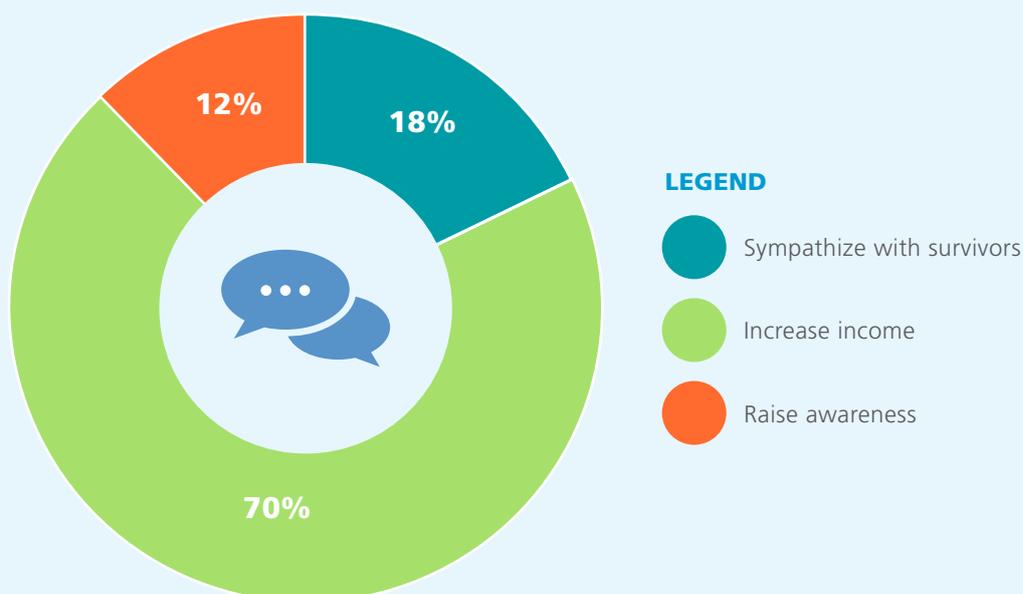
While just under half of respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan (48 percent) feel insecure when working in the field, slightly more than half (52 percent) feel safe.

Approximately one-third of respondents in the region (30 percent) confirmed that cases of violence and harassment have occurred and expressed their willingness to address these issues. Over two-thirds (70 percent) indicated that they are unaware of any such incidents.

Of the respondents who suggested ways to address harassment in Gilgit-Baltistan, more than half (70 percent) recommended increasing incomes to ensure financial stability, 18 percent called for sympathy with survivors, and 12 percent recommended training and awareness raising programmes for rural communities.

Roughly 20 percent of respondents in Gilgit-Baltistan were aware of government efforts to address protection concerns through training and by distributing information, education and communication (IEC) materials to rural farming communities. The remaining 80 percent of respondents provided no response.

Figure 13 | Women farmers' suggestions on how to address workplace harassment in Gilgit-Baltistan

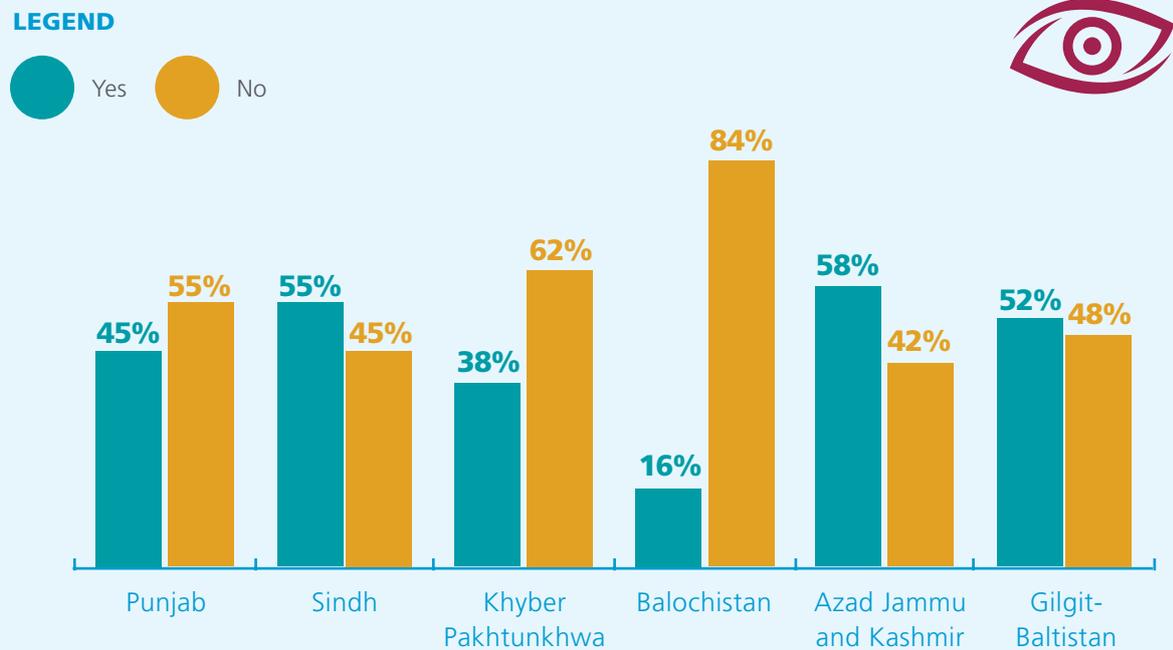


Source: Questionnaire respondents.

This suggests that they may not have understood the question, or they may be unaware of government initiatives such as Kissan Cards or the Ehsaas Programme, although 60 percent of Ehsaas interventions target women and vulnerable groups.

Overview of protection-related findings by province/region

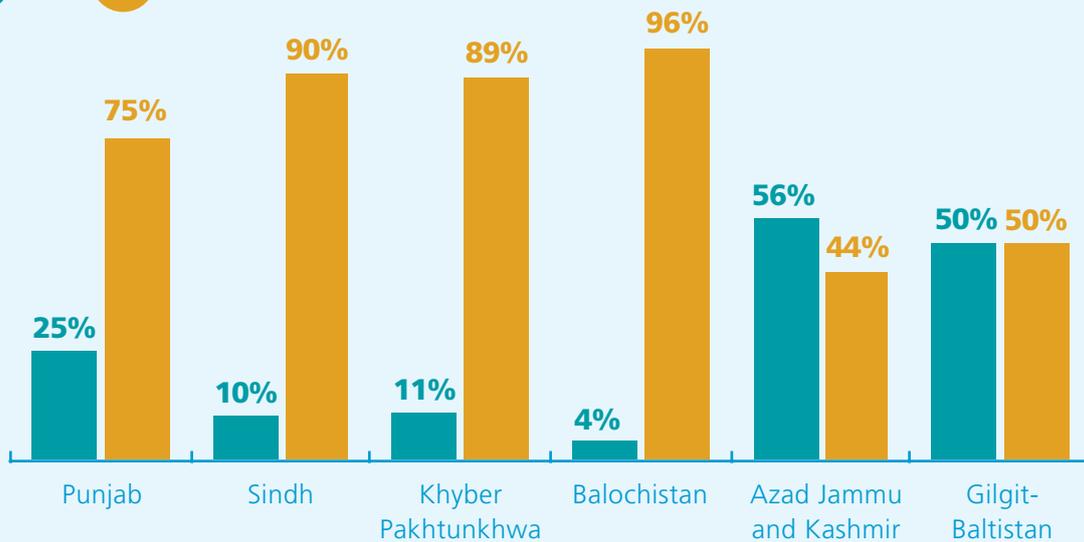
Figure 14 | Women farmers' awareness of harassment issues by province/region



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Figure 15 | Women farmers' awareness of laws on harassment by province/region

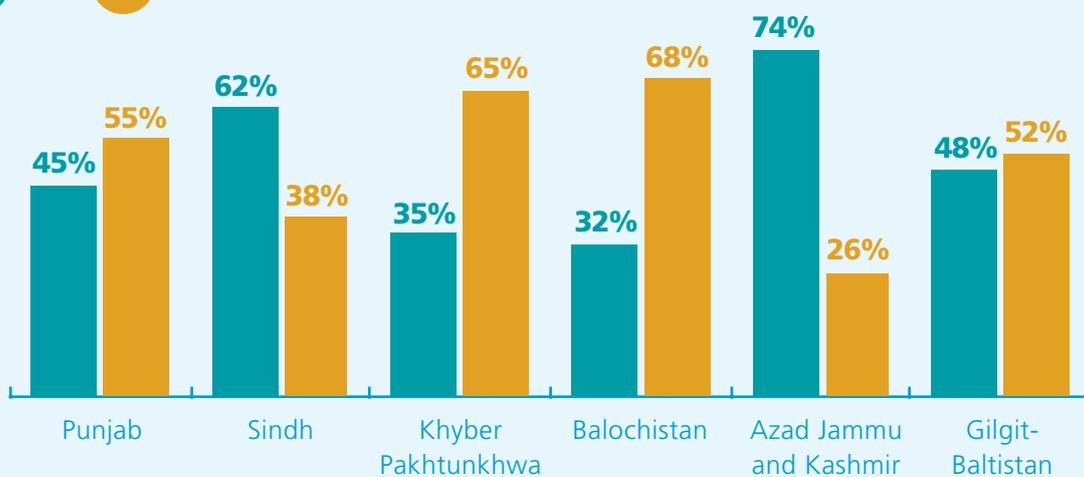
LEGEND



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

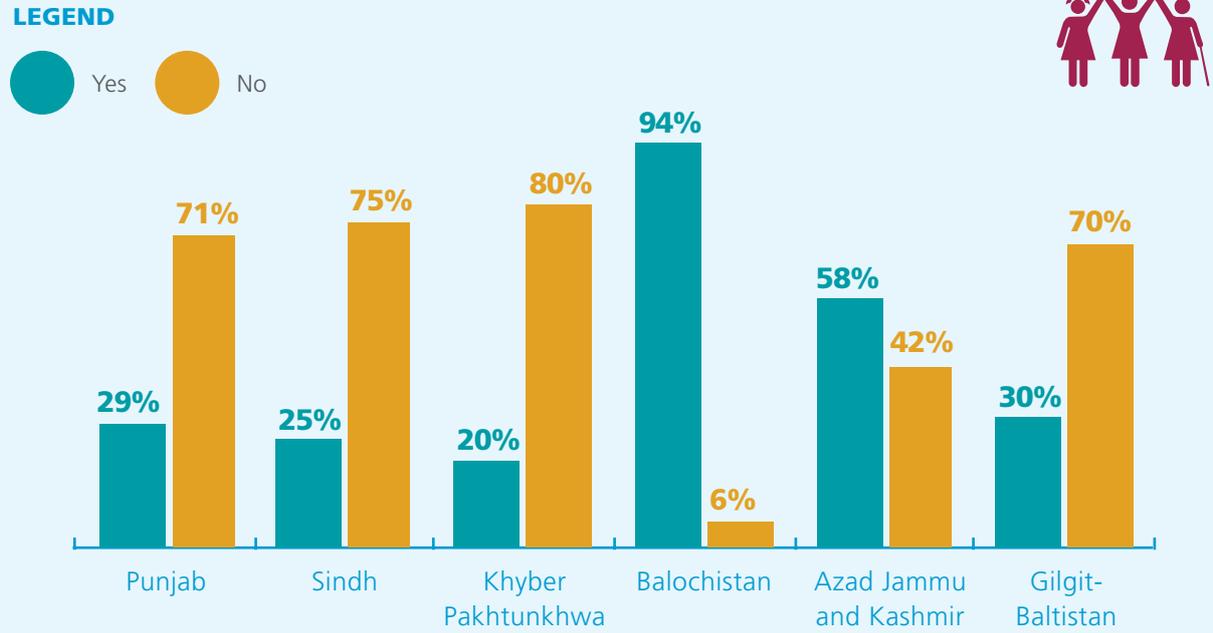
Figure 16 | Proportion of women farmers who feel insecure at work by province/region

LEGEND



Source: Questionnaire respondents.

Figure 17 | Women farmers willing to tackle harassment issues by province/region



Source: Questionnaire respondents.



04

Collecting the data of a women farmworker at Chak number 399, Layyah, Punjab, March 2022.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several factors affect the safety and well-being of women in Pakistan's agriculture sector, ranging from quality education, to labour issues, discrimination, violence and harassment. Challenges faced by women farmers include gender-based disparities in daily wage rates and the working hours of women and men, women's double burden of on-farm and off-farm activities, a lack of clean drinking water and appropriate sanitation facilities, the limited availability and poor quality of health services, and an imbalanced intake of food which affects women's health and leaves them prone to health problems.

Recognition is another major issue – women farmers are largely unrecognized for their major contributions to agriculture, food security and development at large. Women engaged in agricultural activities are rarely referred to as 'women farmers' unlike their male counterparts. Based on responses from by more than 2,000 participants who engaged in this study, any man or woman involved in the following activities – which women farmers across the country are involved in – should be considered a 'farmer':

1. Sowing.
2. Transplanting.
3. Weeding.
4. Harvesting, including with hand-held tools.
5. Post-harvest operations, such as threshing, winnowing, drying, grinding, husking and storage.
6. Working with livestock, including milking, feeding, treating sick animals, herding, cutting and collecting fodder, caring for poultry, breeding, weaning, cleaning animal waste and shelters, converting manure into fuel or fertilizer, processing milk, and processing wool.

The 118 participants who participated in the six **stakeholder consultations** held for this study identified a range of challenges faced by women farmers. In terms of work-related challenges, they highlighted heavy workloads of between 12 to 18 hours per day, a lack of access to independent agricultural production (in terms of access to land, credit, water and technology), a lack of agriculture-related technical education and training opportunities, and limited access to advisory services. Women are also disadvantaged by poor access to transport, marketing mechanisms and banking services. They have few alternative sources of income generation, and as a result of the gender wage gap in agriculture, women earn less than men for work of equal value.

Other challenges include the lack of a minimum wage and collective bargaining in the agriculture sector, as well as delayed payments by contractors. Informal employment exposes women in agriculture to the risk of exploitation. Women's vulnerability is exacerbated by their low levels of land ownership, lack of control over productive and financial assets, and mobility restrictions prompted by inequitable gender norms.

In terms of women's well-being, protection issues include a lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities at work, as well as to basic health facilities. Health problems are common among women farmers due to the excessive use of pesticides. Low levels of awareness continue to hold women back – including limited awareness of protection issues, workers' rights and the impacts of climate change. Although national legislation is fairly comprehensive in terms of addressing violence against women, gaps and implementation challenges persist. Pakistan's labour laws do not cover the agriculture sector and the country lacks a national law to safeguard the rights of women involved in agriculture. However, the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 is a legislative milestone that other provinces can replicate.

Focus group discussions with 907 women across 43 districts suggest that sexual harassment is frequent and persistent in agricultural workplaces. Women farmers are often exposed to hostile working environments – including exposure to violence, harassment and verbal abuse, particularly while working in the fields. Focus group participants believe that both women workers and children are not safe in the fields. For instance, 81 percent of participants do not feel safe travelling alone for work, while 86.9 percent do not feel safe working alone in the fields. The discussions also highlighted mobility restrictions and a lack of sanitation and child care facilities as major challenges. Moreover, the focus groups reveal a lack of awareness among women farmers. For instance, 85 percent of participants reported lacking information or knowledge about redressal mechanisms. Socioeconomic factors increase women's risk of exposure to violence and harassment in the agriculture sector – such as the pressure to contribute to their household's income. According to the focus groups, a lack of awareness of laws, reporting procedures and redressal mechanisms, coupled with the fear of losing their livelihoods, prevents women farmers from reporting incidents of violence

and harassment to the authorities. The study's findings reveal that many women farmers (66 percent), especially those living in areas with powerful land owners, do not understand the government's role in addressing challenges faced by farmers, agricultural workers and rural communities. Respondents highlighted the importance of education to enable marginalized communities to lift themselves out of poverty, including training and awareness raising. One-quarter (25 percent) of respondents recommended providing training to raise awareness of how to protect women from health problems, harassment and violence, while 14 percent underscored the need to address women's lack of financial resources to strengthen their position in society.

Among the 630 women who completed this study's **survey questionnaire**, a high proportion of respondents do not understand what the term 'harassment' means, or are unaware of harassment-related issues – ranging from 84 percent of respondents in Balochistan, to 62 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 55 percent in Punjab, 45 percent in Sindh, 48 percent in Gilgit-Baltistan and 42 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Many respondents are also unaware of existing laws to protect women – from 96 percent of respondents in Balochistan, to 90 percent in Sindh, 89 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 75 percent in Punjab, 49 percent in Gilgit-Baltistan and 44 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There appears to be a correlation between literacy rates and awareness of protection issues. For instance, respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir – a region with higher literacy rates than the national average – displayed greater awareness of harassment-related issues and laws. This may also be due to awareness raising efforts. For instance, 66 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported becoming aware of existing legislation through information sessions and training on the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010.

A considerable proportion of questionnaire respondents reported feeling insecure at work or travelling to work – from 74 percent in the region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to 62 percent in Sindh, 48 percent in Gilgit-Baltistan, 45 percent in Punjab, 35 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 32 percent in Balochistan. It is worth noting that in provinces where women report feeling more secure, they tend to work close to home or in groups, rather than alone. For instance, 65 percent of respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa feel secure at work. Several questionnaire respondents also expressed their willingness to address protection concerns – from 58 percent of respondents in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, to 30 percent in Gilgit-Baltistan, 25 percent in Sindh, 20 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 6 percent in Balochistan.



Recommendations for strategy solutions



Recommendations for federal and provincial governments, and legislators



1 Amend labour and agriculture policies at the federal and provincial levels to recognize all women who perform any work related to crops, fruit, vegetables, livestock, fisheries, poultry, dairy, forestry and post-harvest production as 'farmers', whether they work full-time or part-time, and including those who work on family farms but do not own land themselves.



2 Set a minimum wage for women farmers and ensure that their wages are not less than the wages of male agricultural workers for work of equal value.



3 Develop an implementation mechanism for the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 and review the mechanism annually to enable improvements.



4 Allocate unused land at the federal and provincial levels to landless rural women farmers and provide them with water and input subsidies to support their success.



5 Disseminate information to raise awareness of protection issues and violence against women through government information departments at the federal and provincial levels. This should include the use of the radio and television, as well as media campaigns in local language newspapers, with a view to addressing the underreporting of incidents of violence and harassment. Awareness raising materials should be directed at both men and women.



6 Ensure that the police and Departments of Labour, Agriculture and Women's Development work in coordination to monitor harassment and violence against women farmers, provide immediate relief to survivors, and support them to file complaints and use redressal mechanisms.



7 Develop and enforce policies to ensure safe and affordable transport services for women farmers provided by their employers. Hire female inspectors to oversee the implementation and functioning of these transport services.



8 Develop and enforce policies to ensure the provision of safe, clean and gender-segregated toilet facilities for women farmers.

Hire female inspectors to monitor compliance and ensure that women have access to clean water and privacy in sanitation facilities.



Hire female staff in agriculture extension departments in every district in order to reach out to women farmers and provide them with technical assistance.



Include the labour and time spent by women in all fields of agricultural work in the national Labour Force Survey. Support women farmers to obtain health cards and register for old-age pensions.



Recommendations for civil society and the media



Prepare educational materials in local languages, including illustrations, and disseminate these among rural men and women farmers to raise awareness of women's rights, harassment and violence against women, and existing protection services – including avenues for referrals and details on laws to protect women from abuse and ensure the protection of whistle-blowers.



Highlight – through journalists and all forms of the media (the print media, radio, television and social media) – the challenges faced by women farmers and promote their protection.



Address women working in the agriculture sector as 'women farmers' across civil society and the media in order to promote the recognition of their labour and contributions, as well as access to social protection and old-age benefits.



Review the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019, bringing together women's groups and civil society organizations, monitor the government's implementation of the Act and monitor compliance with the Act to ensure that women farmers benefit from it.



Support rural women farmers to participate in leadership meetings so that their collective voices, ideas and demands are heard.



Document cases of protection issues faced by women in agriculture through women's rights NGOs, as well as success stories of positive outcomes from both women's and men's perspectives.



Recommendations for FAO



Promote the rights of women farmers by working with the government, civil society and the media to promote measures that address the protection issues they face.



Prioritize the development of multi-year projects with civil society – especially women's rights NGOs – that place women farmers' protection from violence at the centre of all activities on agriculture, nutrition and food security, in order to advance long-term change in Pakistan.



Add a women's rights and protection component to every technical training on agriculture to enable women to learn about laws that can protect them from violence.

4 Provide technical assistance to government officials to integrate protection issues in all government programmes. Enhance their understanding of the fact that not protecting women farmers from violence and harassment violates their human rights.

5 Provide technical assistance and funding to the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women to develop an implementation mechanism for the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019.

6 Facilitate the development of a Centre of Excellence on Gender Issues in Pakistan's agricultural universities to support their development of programmes on agriculture, nutrition and food security with a focus on the rights of women farmers.



Suggested key strategy solutions



I Advocate for a formal definition of 'women farmers' to ensure that their labour is recognized and counted in the same way as the work of male farmers in Pakistan.



II Advocate with the Government of Pakistan to acknowledge women farmers as formal economy workers to ensure that they are registered and entitled to all benefit from government schemes, as well as a safe, harassment-free, enabling work environment.



III Advocate for the creation of a mechanism to record women's participation in, time spent on, and contributions to the agriculture sector.



IV Organize consultations to review the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act of 2019 and its implementation mechanism, and suggest improved versions for other provinces.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. DISSEMINATION OF THE DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Province/ region	Number of districts	Number of questionnaire forms sent	Number of questionnaire forms received/ respondents	Sent by email	Sent via WhatsApp	Sent by post/ courier
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	6	86	50	5	17	64
Balochistan	13	132	103	11	30	91
Gilgit-Baltistan	5	70	50	7	15	48
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	17	157	104	14	45	98
Punjab	22	240	211	21	48	171
Sindh	19	155	112	15	32	108
Total	82	840	630			

ANNEX 2. LIST OF MEETINGS

Focus group discussions by province

Punjab

Date	Location	Number of participants	Crops/livestock
Wednesday, 23 February 2022	Baggay village, Kasur district	8 women farmers 4 farmworkers	Sugarcane, potatoes, rice fodder for livestock
Thursday, 24 February 2022	Jatri village, Nankana Sahib district	10 women farmers 8 farmworkers	Guava, mustard, wheat, sugarcane, livestock
Thursday, 24 February 2022	Jatri village, Nankana Sahib district	5 women farmers	Lemon orchids, vegetables
Thursday, 24 February 2022	Jatri village, Nankana Sahib district	7 women farmworkers	Guava orchids, vegetable nurseries
Friday, 25 February 2022	Chak number 27/11.L, Chichawatni, Sahiwal district	12 women farmers 10 farm workers	Wheat, sugarcane, tunnel farms
Saturday, 26 February 2022	Harappa, Sahiwal district	8 women farmers	Livestock, wheat
Saturday, 26 February 2022	Chak number 81/82. 10 R, Perowal, Khanewal district	17 women farmworkers	Wheat, cotton, mangoes
Tuesday, 1 March 2022	Shamlat Kalarwali, Jatoi tehsil, Muzaffargarh district	18 women farmers	Out-of-season vegetables, wheat, cotton, livestock
Wednesday, 2 March 2022	Chahchandanwala, Bait Qiam, Kot Adu tehsil, Muzaffargarh district	12 farmworkers	Out-of-season vegetables, wheat, cotton
Tuesday, 2 March 2022	Chak number 399, Layyah district	5 women farmers	Chickpeas, fodder , small ruminants
Wednesday, 3 March 2022	Khairay Wala, Chobara tehsil, Layyah district	32 women farmworkers	Chickpeas, millet, oil seed crops, wheat
Thursday 3 March 2022	Basti Mian Panja, Dagar Rahtas Garbi, Bhakkar district	18 women farmworkers	Vegetables, oil seed crops, wheat, dates

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Date	Location	Number of participants	Crops/livestock
Saturday, 12 March 2022	Shamilat Dargai village, Charsadda district	9 women farmers 5 farmworkers	Wheat, maize, sugarcane, tobacco, small ruminants
Saturday, 12 March 2022	Sikandari village, Mardan district	10 women farmers 4 farmworkers	Maize, rice, sugarcane, wheat, barley, mustard, fruit, vegetables
Monday, 14 March 2022	Paniyala village, Dera Ismail Khan district	9 women farmers 7 farmworkers	Gram, wheat, barley, rape seeds, mustard, fruit
Monday, 14 March 2022	Basti Darbar village, Mardan Kalan, Dera Ismail Khan district	12 women farmers 15 farmworkers	Cotton, maize, rice, sugarcane, wheat, livestock
Wednesday, 16 March 2022	Risalpur, Nowshera district	16 women farmworkers	Seasonal and out-of-season vegetables (picking/packaging)
Wednesday, 16 March 2022	Maneri union council, Swabi district	2 women farmers 6 farmworkers	Tobacco, wheat, maize
Wednesday, 16 March 2022	Bazargai, Swabi district	9 women farmers and 2 farmworkers	Tobacco, wheat, maize, livestock, pulses
Friday, 18 March 2022	Kashka, Abbottabad district	16 women farmers 10 farmworkers	Beans, potatoes, peas, seasonal and out-of-season vegetables (picking/packaging)
Friday, 18 March 2022	Alloli village, Haripur district	8 women farmers 5 farmworkers	Seasonal and out-of-season vegetables and fruit (picking/packaging)

Balochistan

Wednesday, 23 March 2022	Killa Saifullah	15 women farmers 5 farmworkers	Fruit (tomatoes, apples), vegetables, almonds
Wednesday, 23 March 2022	Chinali village, Loralai district	11 women farmers	Sorghum, millet, maize, mung beans, fruit, livestock
Friday, 25 March 2022	Warchoom village, Ziarat district	20 women farmers	Poultry, livestock, wheat, fruit (cherries, apples)
Friday, 25 March 2022	Killi Faizabad village, Pishin district	12 women farmers	Wheat, maize, onions, tobacco, grapes and apples

Date	Location	Number of participants	Crops/livestock
Saturday, 26 March 2022	Luni village, Sibi district	8 women farmers	Wheat, fruit (dates)
Saturday, 26 March 2022	Peer Baksahar village, Dera Murad Jamali	17 farmworkers	Potatoes, tomatoes, rice, wheat, maize, fruit, vegetables
Monday, 28 March 2022	Killi Poringabad, Mastung district	8 farmworkers	Wheat, potatoes, onions, apples, cherries
Tuesday, 29 March 2022	Killi Ghulam Jalani, Kalat district	10 women farmers 8 farmworkers	Apples, grapes, cherries, small ruminants
Wednesday, 30 March 2022	Killi Kurmi, Khuzdar district	11 women farmers 10 farmworkers	Wheat, barley, fodder, small ruminants
Wednesday, 30 March 2022	Wang, Bela, Lasbella district	28 farmworkers	Cotton, wheat, fodder, livestock, small ruminants

Sindh

Saturday, 2 April 2022	Izatshah Lashari, Sukapur, Mirpur Sakra, Thatta district	10 farmworkers	Rice, bananas, cotton, sugarcane
Saturday, 2 April 2022	Kohli village, Badin district	38 farmworkers	Sugarcane, cotton, sunflowers, vegetables, livestock
Saturday, 2 April 2022	M. Achar Rind village, Badin district	9 farmworkers	Barley, wheat, peas, sesamum, sunflowers, small ruminants
Sunday, 3 April 2022	Mithrir Bhati Talka Mithi, Tharparkar district	35 farmworkers	Livestock, millet, beans, sorghum, sesamum
Monday, 4 April 2022	Goth Buralal, Amarkot district	27 farmworkers	Sorghum, sesamum, millet, mung beans, livestock
Monday, 4 April 2022	Anwar Rajar village, Atta Muhammad union council, Amarkot district	23 farmworkers	Wheat, chillies, cotton, onions, fruit (mangoes)
Tuesday, 5 April 2022	Goth Bhago Wadadai, Sanghar district	32 farmworkers	Cotton, wheat, sunflowers, soybeans, rape seeds, mustard, groundnuts
Tuesday, 5 April 2022	Baqar Magsi village, Sakrand tehsil, Nawabshah district	28 farmworkers	Cotton, millet, sugarcane, fruit, small ruminants

Date	Location	Number of participants	Crops/livestock
Wednesday, 6 April 2022	Dhagi Farm Kotri Jamsharoo village, Hyderabad district	9 farmworkers	Millet, sorghum, rice, wheat, cotton, small ruminants
Thursday, 7 April 2022	Azadnagar village Tandohyder, Hyderabad district	8 farmworkers	Oil seeds, fruit (mangoes), small ruminants
Friday, 8 April 2022	Goth Muradali, Dadu district	26 farmworkers	Cotton, rape seeds, mustard, sunflowers, wheat, barley, gram, pulses, oil seeds
Friday, 8 April 2022	Manchar Lake, Dadu district	31 fisheries' workers	Fisheries
Saturday, 9 April 2022	Goth Usman Kalhor, Larkana district	15 farmworkers	Wheat, peas, gram, oil-seeds, rice, livestock
Sunday, 10 April 2022	Goth Dharki, Ghotki district	69 farmworkers	Cotton, wheat, sugarcane, rice, fruit (mangoes, dates, lemons, strawberries, bananas, guava, watermelons)

Gilgit-Baltistan

Wednesday, 4 May 2022	Rahimabad, Gilgit district	15 farmworkers	Potatoes, wheat, maize, fruit (apples, apricots, cherries), livestock
Thursday, 5 May 2022	Nasirabad, Hunza district	15 farmworkers	Vegetables, fruit (apples, apricots, cherries), livestock
Friday, 6 May 2022	Damas, Gahkuch, Ghizer district	15 farmworkers	Fruit (apples, apricots, cherries, mulberries), walnuts, livestock

Azad Jammu and Kashmir

Saturday, 14 May 2022	Jhelum valley, Muzaffarabad district	20 farmworkers	Maize, rice, wheat, vegetables, fruit (apples, apricots)
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List of meetings with government representatives

Azad Jammu and Kashmir

- Dr Faraz Akrim, Department of Zoology, University of Kotli Azad Jammu and Kashmir

Balochistan

- Dr Muhammad Ashraf, Associate Professor, Department of Disaster Risk Management, University of Balochistan, Quetta
- Ms Zargoon Tareen, Station House Officer (SHO), Women Smart Police Station Quetta
- Ms Shazia Riaz, Director, Department of Women Development, Quetta
- Ms Nadia Nazar, Agriculture Extension Officer, Quetta
- Dr Din Muhammad, Director, District Livestock Department, Ziarat
- Mr Ijaz Umrani, Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Department, Naseerabad
- Dr Muhammad Shahzad, Assistant Professor, Agriculture Department, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water & Marine Sciences, Lasbela

Gilgit-Baltistan

- Mr Muhammad Hussain, Horticulture Department, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan

Islamabad

- Dr Tabinada Khawaja, Project Manager, Prime Minister's Livestock Initiative, National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC)
- Dr Shahzad Ahmad Baloch, Deputy Chief, Food & Agriculture, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

- Dr Humaria Iqbal, Project Leader, Dairy-beef Project, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- Dr Riffat Sardar, Chairperson, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Dr Nazia Tahir, Assistant Professor, Soil and Climate Change Department, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan
- Mr Arbab Ali, District Agriculture Officer, Swabi
- Ms Ume Habibba, Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Haripur
- Mr Muhammad Farid Kahn Khattak, Extra Assistant Director of Agriculture, Dera Ismail Khan

Punjab

- Ms Saima Khalid, Agriculture Delivery Unit, Punjab Agriculture Department, Lahore
- Ms Aisha Siddique, Project Manager, Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Lahore
- Dr Haroon Muzaffar, Project Manager, Small Ruminants Project, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore
- Ms Muneza Manzoor Butt, Manager, Violence against Women Centre Multan
- Mr Nandlal, Social Welfare Officer, Multan
- Dr Kamran Yousuf, Assistant Professor, Department of Agriculture, University of Okara
- Ms Amina Batool, Agriculture Extension Officer, Attock
- Mr Zeezhan Ubaid, District Agriculture Officer, Punjab Agriculture Department, Toba Tek Singh

Sindh

- Ms Nuzhat Shirin, Chairperson, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, Government of Sindh
- Mr Ghulam Mustafa, Director Information, Agriculture Extension Department Hyderabad
- Professor Dr Ismail Khumbar, Director, Gender Resource Centre, Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam
- Mr Juma Khan and Dr Aneela Shan, Directorate of Social Sciences Research Institute, PARC Tandojam, Hyderabad
- Dr Muhammad Awais, Project Leader, Better Cotton Initiative Project Team, Dadu



ANNEX 3. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Consultation in Islamabad Capital Territory

The first consultation was organized at FAO's Country Office in Islamabad to review the questionnaire designed for this study. A total of 21 representatives of agriculture and women's rights-related NGOs, INGOs, expert staff of the National Agriculture Research Centre, academics, government representatives from Departments of Agriculture and rural women farmers attended. They provided general and specific feedback on the questionnaire, providing useful feedback with which to strengthen this data collection tool. They also suggested highlighting a number of points clearly, which the study team subsequently added:

- The formal definition of women farmers in Pakistan.
- The minimum wage and average working hours of women farmers, including women who work on family farms.
- Issues of equal pay for male and female farmworkers.
- The inclusion of women farmworkers in the national Labour Force Survey.
- Reviewing the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act of 2019 and the status of its implementation.
- Transportation problems faced by women farmers.
- Women farmers' access to banking and credit.

Consultation in Lahore, Punjab

A second stakeholder consultation – held at the Agriculture Delivery Unit of the Government of Punjab's Department of Agriculture in Lahore – collected feedback on the first pilot test of the questionnaire in Punjab's districts of Chakwal, Jhelum, Sargodha and Toba Tek Singh. Fourteen participants including representatives from the Punjab Department of Agriculture, agriculture and women's rights-related NGOs, INGOs, economists, academics, expert staff of the Punjab Crop Reporting Unit and gender experts from the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women participated. To strengthen the study's approach and methodology, they suggested:

- Adding a question on health and safety, targeting women cotton pickers in Sindh and South Punjab.
- Adding more questions related to caring for livestock, livestock management and poultry farming.
- Educating women on how to report instances of harassment by filing a complaint.

The participants also identified and agreed on which protection issues are especially relevant, as well as the level of women's involvement in agriculture. The study team incorporated all of these suggestions.

Consultation in Multan, South Punjab

The third stakeholder consultation – held in Multan, South Punjab at the offices of the Savail Development Organization – gathered participants' feedback and encouraged them to undertake data collection and focus group discussions in the division of Multan.

Seventeen representatives of the district Department of Agriculture, the Social Welfare Department, and the director and team of the Violence against Women Centre (VAWC) in Multan participated, alongside experts representing local NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and the media. In terms of the study's approach and methodology, they observed that:

- The Violence against Women Centre in Multan receives more reports of gender-based violence cases in the summer months (between March and October). Whether this is related to the high volume of agricultural work that takes place in the region during this time needs to be investigated.
- Since 2017, cases of domestic violence account for the greatest number of cases registered at Multan's Violence against Women Centre.
- Women farmers face a number of protection challenges but are largely unaware of both their rights and any redressal mechanisms.
- Women farmers are often exposed to harassment and abuse by male farmers, supervisors, villagers and landlords. However, most do not lodge official complaints.

Consultation in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The fourth stakeholder consultation – held in Peshawar at the offices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission of the Status of Women (KPCSW) – collected participants' feedback on the study's questionnaire, data collection planning, and the identification areas where women are actively involved in agriculture. A total of 23 representatives of district Departments of Agriculture, academia, the Ombudsperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, experts from local NGOs and CBOs, members of women's networks and the media participate.

They noted that:

- Gender sensitization efforts are important for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's agriculture extension departments. There is also a great need to hire more women service providers in the provincial Departments of Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Labour.
- Despite several challenges related to property rights and misbehaviour faced by women, they are reluctant to share experiences of harassment or unfair treatment in the field due to fear and discriminatory social norms.
- When women's inheritance, property and land rights are violated, violations are usually committed by family members by means of coercion, fraud and cheating.
- The proactive work of the provincial Ombudsperson on protecting women from harassment and safeguarding their inheritance rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has encouraged women to file cases related to their property rights in districts where women have won cases.

Consultation in Quetta, Balochistan

The fifth stakeholder consultation – held in Quetta at FAO's office at the Balochistan Agriculture Research Development Centre – discussed major objectives faced by the study and sought participants' feedback to understand the protection issues faced by women in agriculture in the province. Overall, 25 representatives of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Water Management, INGOs and NGOs participated, alongside academics, lawyers, gender experts from women's rights organizations and media professionals. Key observations included:

- Compared to other provinces, there was a greater level of sensitivity about talking to the study team about the protection issues faced by women.

- Visiting both Baloch and Pashtun communities is important for research purposes in Balochistan.
- Gender-disaggregated data is essential for understanding the protection issues faced by women in rural areas. Such data should be collected at the district level to ensure accurate analysis.
- Women who dry fruit at home should be considered home-based women workers.
- Women farmers work more than eight hours per day, yet most remain unaware of how much money their male family members obtain for the produce yielded by their labour and sold in the market.
- There is a need to identify the number of registered women farmers in Sindh. Representatives of the Departments of Labour and Law stated that they will jointly develop rules of business and submit these to the Department of Labour.
- Sindh's Commission on the Status of Women committed to engage local stakeholders to advance the Act's implementation at the district level and ensure provincial level support.
- While stakeholders applaud the Act for affirming aspirational principles on women's rights, some feel that the Act's scope is very wide and some parts of it are vague or not clearly articulated.

Consultation in Karachi, Sindh

The final stakeholder consultation was held at the office of the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women (SCSW) in Karachi to review the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act of 2019. Eighteen representatives of the province's Departments of Agriculture, Labour, Law and Women's Development took part, as did experts from legal aid service groups, NGOs, academics and members of women's rights organizations.

The stakeholders observed that:

- Most rural women, especially women farmers, are unaware of existing laws to protect women's rights. As such, they are unable to benefit from these laws.
- The agriculture sector is the largest employer in Sindh. However, the labour rights of women farmers are often unprotected – most do not have written contracts, tend to be paid less than the minimum wage and are usually paid less than men. Fathers and husbands often receive the salary of women farmers in the family, and contractors usually do not give women workers their wages directly.

- Some of the definitions included in the Act are limited. Important terms, such as 'woman farmer' and 'employer' need to be clearly defined. The issues of whether a woman owns the land she works on, or whether she works for an employer, also need to be clarified.

FAO Representation in Pakistan

National Agricultural Research Center (NARC).

Park Road, Chak Shahzad.

Islamabad

Mailing Address:

PO Box 1476, Islamabad

+92-51-9255491

+92-51-9255454

Email: FAO-PK@fao.org

Website: <https://www.fao.org/pakistan/en/>

Twitter: [@FAOPakistan](https://twitter.com/FAOPakistan)

Facebook: [@FAOinPakistan](https://www.facebook.com/FAOinPakistan)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Islamabad, Pakistan

