

Sindh Barrages Improvement Project

Title	Gender Action Plan
Reference	426054/360-A
Date	October 2023
Notes	Inputs from PMO, PIC and PCMU

1. Introduction

Irrigation Department, Government of Sindh (GoS) is undertaking the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project, with funding from World Bank. The works for the rehabilitation of Guddu Barrage is underway via one primary construction contract (SBIP-G2). The main barrage works at Sukkur Barrage (SBIP-S1) commenced in February 2023. There are two potential upcoming contracts; SBIP-G3A Construction of Right TJ Spur, and SBIP-S4 Desilting of Rice Canal.

Gender integration is considered within the SBIP Results Framework, with 'the number of female beneficiaries' standing as one of the key Project Development Objective Indicator. In pursuit of this objective, SBIP includes initiatives to provide training and promote the active participation of female stakeholders.

In 2022, World Bank has recommended that a proposal to enhance employment opportunities for women workers at the project sites was developed. A memo was subsequently developed by Project Implementation Consultant (PIC), with advice from PMO and inputs from G2 and S1 Contractors; *Assessment of opportunities for promotion of women employment - March 2023*. The report is enclosed in Annexure A and summarises the baseline of the project area, an assessment of the opportunities, documentation of the safeguarding related risks and associated mitigation measures.

Following discussions with the key stakeholders; World Bank, PMO, PCMU and PIC, it was agreed to expand the scope of this assessment and develop a comprehensive Gender Action Plan for SBIP.

This report summarises the key components of the Gender Action Plan.

There are several organisations working within SBIP, namely PMO, PCMU, the Contractors and PIC. The Gender Action Plan focuses on the Contractors as they are the largest employer, particularly directly in the project areas, with up to 300 employees at both Guddu and Sukkur. However there are associated actions for all organisations to ensure that they fulfil opportunities to be equal opportunities employers.

PMO will be the overall owner of the SBIP Gender Action Plan, with actions and responsibilities assigned to PIC and the Contractors accordingly. PCMU will monitor accordingly.

2. Background

2.1 Gender mainstreaming

As stated by the World Bank, *gender discrimination not only has a negative impact on women's income; it also impedes companies and society from making use of the special skills that women contribute to the economy*¹. The purpose of this proposal is to mainstream gender within SBIP and use the project as an opportunity to promote equal treatment in the project area.

¹ [How Can We Increase Women's Participation in Infrastructure Projects? \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/18/como-incrementar-la-participacion-de-la-mujer-en-proyectos-de-infraestructura)
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2.2 Project area

With regard to the socio-economic characteristics of project area, the communities in the rural areas around Guddu and Sukkur primarily rely on agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Both men and women participate in this manual labour. Approximately 80% of the women in the project area have not received formal education. The ESA for Sukkur found that the role of women in domestic activities, their involvement in decision making and access to education, hospital and travel was very limited. Women have high involvement in household activities and child rearing. The only economic activities with some of women is livestock rearing and farming. This differed in the urban areas (including Sukkur city itself) where they have access to such services.

As per the ESA for the Guddu area, the status of women in the project area is stated as acutely disadvantaged. Women bear a disproportionately high share of burden of poverty; have unequal access to economic options and social services, lower endowments of land and other productive assets. Roles in decision making are extremely limited.

There are urban areas and colonies in the SBIP project area which have developed around industrial installations such as power plants, gas fields, oil storage, sugar mills and others. Staff from this area report different socio-cultural norms regarding female participation and roles within the household.

2.3 Limitations

There are limitations to the impact that the current scope of SBIP can have on gender equality in the project area, noting the widespread social & cultural norms.

It has been agreed that the focus should be on the opportunities within the existing skill set of the various organisations' staff (such as sociologists from PMO, PIC and Contractor). In addition, that the priority focus in the first 6 months should be ensuring the SBIP organisations are equal opportunity employers and are ensuring participation and consideration of women in the project activities. Then further activities in the wider communities, such as outreach sessions in the schools, will be planned accordingly.

3. Gender Action Plan

3.1 Aim

The overall aim of the SBIP Gender Action Plan is:

Aim: To promote social and financial equality of women living in the SBIP project area

This aim recognises that gender equality cannot be solved by SBIP alone, but SBIP can be used as a vehicle to positively impact the communities that the project is working in.

3.2 Objectives

In order to achieve this aim, three specific objectives have been set:

- Objective A: Ensure participation of women in SBIP consultation process.**
- Objective B: Enhance employment opportunities for women in SBIP.**
- Objective C: Encourage social inclusion and equality of women in the wider communities.**

The purpose of Objective A is to mainstream gender in the SBIP activities, such as public consultations and activities to understand and mitigate social impact.

The purpose of Objective B is to enhance job opportunities for women on SBIP; safely and appropriately. This brings financial benefit, as well as secondary benefits such as promotion of equal treatment. As per the findings of the employment assessment (see Annexure A), it should be noted that hiring women as

construction workers in the project area appears to be very rare, unless there is a dedicated social program which has been developed with appropriate considerations (including safeguarding). This must be assessed and managed appropriately before proceeding.

The purpose of Objective C is to use the SBIP project as a vehicle to showcase the benefits of equal treatment of the genders to the communities that SBIP is working in.

As advised by PCMU, measurable indicators have been assigned accordingly to ascertain when the Objectives can be considered as successfully achieved.

3.3 Activities

In order to achieve the Objectives outlined above, a series of activities have been defined for each Objective. The responsibilities of these have been assigned to various organisations.

As advised by PCMU, measurable indicators have been assigned accordingly to measure when the activities are successfully completed.

Each activity has been given a corresponding organisation who is overall responsible for completing that activity, noting that many of the activities will be undertaken collaboratively with support from the other organisations.

SBIP Gender Action Plan

Overall aim:	To promote social and financial equality of women living in the SBIP project area				
	Sr	Item	Indicators and Targets	Lead responsible	Timeline
Objective:	A	Ensure participation of women in SBIP consultation process	Percentage of women participants in various SBIP consultations: 30%	PIC	December 2026
Activities to achieve Objective A:	A1	Contractor's stakeholder engagement plans to be reviewed and updated for specific process for ensuring participation of women. Including review alternative consultation methods (e.g. online forums or feedback platforms).	Updated and approved stakeholder engagement plan	Contractor	November 2023
	A2	Existing CESMPs to be reviewed for opportunities to enhance other sections related to participation of women and safeguarding measures (including GRM).	Updated and approved CESMP	Contractor	November 2023
	A3	Hold Workshop at Sukkur to brief local community on the S1 project (including its intended outcomes, CESMP, job opportunities, GRM).	Completion of workshop with 30% participation of women	PMO	March 2024
	A4	Produce pamphlets in Sindhi and Urdu describing the project for dissemination in households to reach women.	Dissemination of pamphlets to 200 households	PMO	January 2024
	A5	Conduct gender-sensitive community outreach: Engage with women's groups, local women leaders, and grassroots organizations to inform them about project consultations and ensure their active participation.	Completion of 6 outreach sessions in local communities (sessions with women) [see C8]	Contractor	Ongoing
	A6	PMO social expert to attend community consultations and monitor attendance of women.	Attendance of PMO social expert at 25% of consultations	PMO	Ongoing
	A7	Establish feedback mechanisms: Set up channels for women to provide feedback and suggestions throughout the project's lifecycle, including anonymous options to ensure women can express their views without fear.	Set up of feedback mechanism (via complaints register process)	PMO	November 2023
	A8	Advocate for women's rights and safety: Collaborate with local law enforcement and legal aid community organizations to address any gender-based violence or SEA/SH issues arising.	Consultation with local law enforcement and community organisations as part of GRM enhancement	Contractor	January 2024
	A9	Employ women as liaison assistant between the project team and the local community to ensure effective communication and participation of women.	Appropriate liaison officer hired.	PMO/ Contractor	March 2024
	A10	Review the Emergency Preparedness Plan for opportunities to improve consideration of women and families during Early Warning Procedures	Reviewed EPP	PIC	December 2023

Objective:	B	Enhance employment opportunities for women in SBIP	Annual increase of women employed by Contractors	PMO	June 2026
Activities to achieve Objective B:	B1	Review employment statistics at both sites of all organisations (gender and local employment, noting skill level and seniority of positions).	Gender employment report for baseline data	PIC	October 2023
	B2	Further discussions with Contractors (HR and CLO) to discuss the opportunity (type and seniority of positions) and the required risk mitigation measures. Noting that all type of jobs must be considered.	2 completed meetings and minuted action plan	PIC	October 2023
	B3	Review relevant guidelines and legislation to ensure equal and safe working conditions (e.g. regarding equal opportunities employers, working mothers, positive discrimination, etc.)	Updated literature review report	PIC	November 2023
	B4	Review of case studies for women employment in related sectors in the local areas and consult with NGOs.	Updated literature review report	PMO	November 2023
	B5	Existing CESMPs to be reviewed to ensure measures related to women staff is adequately covered (including safeguarding mitigation measures, office facilities, training, transportation requirements, etc).	Updated and approved CESMP	Contractor	November 2023
	B6	Consult with local universities (including IBA) and NGOs.	2 completed consultations	PMO	November 2023
	B7	Undertake consultation session in local community to discuss potential opportunities for employment of women at Sukkur to assess social feasibility (S1 Contractor, PMO and PIC).	4 completed consultations	PMO	December 2023
	B8	Contractors to review HR processes for opportunities for improvement (e.g., editing job advertisements to state 'women are encouraged to apply', reviewing promotion process, etc).	Updated and approved HR memo	Contractor	November 2023
	B9	Review options for training and capacity building initiatives.	Updated annual training plan with relevant modules.	Contractor	March 2024
	B10	Undertake consultation session with women's vocational training institutions or centres in the region.	Completion of 2 discussion sessions with vocational centres	PMO	March 2024
	B11	Equal pay will be provided to men and women for work of equal type in accordance with national laws and international norms.	Review and implementation of equal pay.	All	March 2024

Objective:	C	Encourage social inclusion and equality of women in the wider communities	Number of outreach sessions undertaken: 20	PMO	December 2026
Activities to achieve Objective C:	C1	Joint outreach sessions to be undertaken in local girls schools/Colleges.	Completion of 6 outreach sessions in schools/Colleges	PIC	Ongoing
	C2	Joint outreach sessions to be undertaken with local universities, including engineering students site visit and tree plantations.	Completion of 4 outreach sessions in university	Contractor	Ongoing
	C3	Session to be undertaken with local women-led organisations (e.g. self-help groups, local women entrepreneurs' support networks, farming networks) to understand their needs and if there any opportunities for SBIP project to support on relevant workshops (such as encouraging small businesses).	Completion of 2 outreach sessions with women-led organisations	PMO	Ongoing
	C4	Contractors to undertake annual Gender equality training for their employees and other project parties (PMO, PIC, PCMU) by invitation.	1 training per year for all employees regarding gender equality	Contractor	December 2023
	C5	Contractors to consider review of supply chain and opportunities to utilise women owned businesses / businesses that support women.	Identification and use of 2 relevant businesses	Contractor	March 2024
	C6	Success story bulletin to be developed and disseminated appropriately.	1 bulletin produced and disseminated	PIC	December 2024
	C7	Contractors to develop public awareness campaign to promote the important of gender equality and the benefits of women's participation in the workforce (e.g. billboard signage near work sites)	1 campaign implemented in the local area	Contractor	September 2025
	C8	Implement sessions in local community that empower women and marginalized groups to asset their rights, build self-confidence, and resist violence. This can include topics such as entrepreneurship training, leadership development and raise awareness of other programs in the area (such as self-defence classes).	Completion of 6 outreach sessions in local communities (sessions with women) [see A5 and C9]	PMO/ Contractor	Ongoing
	C9	Raise awareness on gender issues: Conduct community-wide awareness campaigns and workshops on gender equality, addressing stereotypes and promoting women's rights. Advocate for gender equality and challenge harmful cultural norms and practices.	Completion of 6 outreach sessions in local communities (sessions with women / men as appropriate) [see A5]	PMO/ Contractor	Ongoing
	C10	Contractor doctor to undertake consultation (with CLO) with local communities regarding women's medical needs and raising awareness of resources (such as local services) that they can access.	Completion of 2 awareness raising activities from Contractor's doctor	Contractor	Ongoing

Annexure A - Assessment of opportunities for promotion of women employment (March 2023)

Sindh Barrages Improvement Project

Title	Assessment of opportunities for promotion of women employment
Our reference	426054/350-A
Date	March 2023
Notes	Compiled by PIC with inputs from G2 and S1 Contractors

1. Introduction

Irrigation Department, Government of Sindh (GoS) is undertaking the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project, with funding from World Bank. The works for the rehabilitation of Guddu Barrage is underway via one primary construction contract (SBIP-G2), with the second due to complete in April 2023 (SBIP-G3). The main barrage works at Sukkur Barrage (SBIP-S1) commenced in February 2023.

Gender has been considered within the Results Framework of the SBIP, with 'number of female beneficiaries' as one of the key Project Development Objective Indicators. Providing training and promoting the participation of female stakeholders is also included in the set-up of SBIP.

The World Bank has recommended that a proposal to enhance employment opportunities for women workers at the project sites is developed. The range of roles and seniority of these positions should also be considered. This memo has been developed by Project Implementation Consultant (PIC), with inputs from G2 and S1 Contractors and advice from PMO. An assessment of the opportunities, safeguarding related risks and associated mitigation measures is summarised.

2. Background

2.1 Purpose

As stated by the World Bank, *gender discrimination not only has a negative impact on women's income; it also impedes companies and society from making use of the special skills that women contribute to the economy*¹. This proposal aims to promote equal treatment and increase economic opportunities for women.

2.2 SBIP

There are several organisations working within SBIP, namely PMO, PCMU, the Contractors and PIC. All these organisations aim to be equal opportunities employers - organisations that agree not to discriminate against any employee or job applicant. The organisations in SBIP consider candidates of all genders when new roles arise or when replacement staff are required.

This memo focusses on the Contractors as they are the largest employer, particularly directly in the project areas. The G2 Contractor is well established in the Guddu area since the works started in 2017. They have around 200 employees which fluctuates on monthly basis, depending on the works underway on site and the requirement for day workers. The S1 Contractor is currently mobilising and is in the process of hiring staff. It is expected that the S1 workforce will be of similar magnitude. The Contractors for G2 and S1 have reported that they have employees of different genders, primarily in their head offices. Both Contractors have a contractual requirement to ensure 60% of the workforce is from the local area. This provision of jobs is a positive social benefit in the project area. Currently there are no women in the Contractors' workforces at site

¹ [How Can We Increase Women's Participation in Infrastructure Projects? \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/18/como-incrementar-la-participacion-de-la-mujer-en-proyectos-de-infraestructura)

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hence no direct benefit to women. However, there will be secondary beneficiaries from increased household income.

2.3 Project area

With regard to the socio-economic characteristics of project area, the communities in the rural areas around Guddu and Sukkur are predominantly agriculturally based. Both men and women participate in this manual labour.

As per the Environmental & Social Assessment (ESA) 2018 the following key socio-economic characteristics for Sukkur can be noted:

- Sukkur district is majority Muslim, constituting 96% of the total population. Sindhis share the biggest segment of population in Sukkur and Rohri city areas (70.50%), followed by Muhajirs (15.50%), Pashtoon (2.50%), Seraiki (1%) and Balochi (1%)
- Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for about 77% of the households, resulting in a seasonal income. Only 6.5% households have employment within their home village or nearby villages and have regular monthly income. 60% of those in the project area live below the poverty line
- Literacy rate is low in the villages surrounding the canal command areas as compared to the overall national level. The literacy ratio amongst male and female is 1.3:1.
- 26.3% of females in the project area are illiterate. Formal education level was achieved by 9.3% of females for primary education, 4.6% for matriculation, 0.6% for intermediate, 1.3% for graduation and 0.4% for post-graduation.
- The ESA found that the role of women in domestic activities, their involvement in decision making and access to education, hospital and travel was very limited. Women have high involvement in household activities and child rearing. The only economic activities with some of women is livestock rearing and farming.
- This differed in the urban areas (including Sukkur city itself) where they have access to such services.

In the Guddu area, the following points are made in the Environmental & Social Assessment (ESA) – Report by Independent Environmental Consultants 2014:

- Around 95% of the population is Muslim. Saraiki is the native language for 90% of the population.
- Agriculture is the primary source of income for about 60 percent of the population in the project area. About 50% work as agricultural labourers with 20% working as labourers in factories, 6% in government services (mostly WAPDA power plant), 6% own small businesses, 6% in private sector companies. Other minor income sources like fishing were noting.
- In Kashmore district the literacy rate in 1998 was 24%, compared to a rate of 6% specifically in the project area in 2014. Female literacy was found to be 1.8%. Formal education level was achieved by 4.6% of females for primary education, 0.3% for matriculation, 0.1% for intermediate. 86.3% of women and 8.0% of girls were uneducated.
- Only 4 out of 11 primary schools offered admissions to girls but during consultations, the local community expressed the strong need for primary schools in their villages.
- The status of women in the project area is stated as acutely disadvantaged. Women bear a disproportionately high share of burden of poverty; have unequal access to economic options and social services, lower endowments of land and other productive assets. Roles in decision making are extremely limited.

There are urban areas and colonies in the SBIP project area which have developed around industry such as power plants, gas fields, oil storage, sugar mills and other factories. Staff from this area report different socio-cultural norms regarding female participation and roles within the household.

2.4 Construction sector

Discussions about female participation in the construction sector in Pakistan were held with various staff members. The following points were noted:

- There was limited awareness of cases women working in manual labour roles within the construction sector either in the project area or more generally in Pakistan.
- Some anecdotal examples of women working in road labour projects were given, with activities such as stone hauling. It was believed that women working in activities were from religious minorities.
- Agricultural manual labour is not seen as a transferable skill for manual labour in the construction industry.
- It was noted that universities in Sindh have women participating more widely in recent years in technical subjects related to construction.

A case study was shared by PMO where a specific program was set up at the coal fields in Tharparkar to hire women truck drivers. The Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company set up a training program which trained 55 women (many of which from low income communities) and employed 25 full time drivers^{2,3}. It is understood that for each woman employed, a man from the family would also be employed. This program fits in a wider CSR / development works in the industrial area, with additional projects such as setting up new schools.

3. Opportunity

The aim is to enhance job opportunities for women on SBIP; safely and appropriately. This brings financial benefit, as well as secondary benefits such as promotion of equal treatment.

There are many jobs with the Contractor, such as engineers, cleaners, managers, medical staff, labourers, welders, administrators. Upskill training also takes place, such as training labourers to work in traffic management.

There may also be secondary opportunities to bring benefit to women in the local area via the supply chain of the project, for example businesses supplying goods to Contractors' camps.

4. Risks and Mitigation Measures

It is understood that there are social and cultural norms which may impact the Contractors' ability to employ women workers, such as:

- Acceptable working hours and safe times to commute.
- Acceptable transportation method for commute.
- Restrictions on staying in accommodation away from home.
- Social norms on interactions between genders.
- Socio-cultural gender roles for different job types (e.g. women not participating in as labourers in the construction sector).

Despite women agricultural labourers having the transferable skills to work in labour intense roles on construction site, it is understood that this is not common and may not be culturally acceptable. It is believed that these restrictions are more prevalent in the rural areas.

There are low literacy levels in the project area. The G2 Contractor has indicated that there are limited candidates available in the Guddu area (particularly women) who would be suitable or available for roles on site, either office based or in the labour workforce. However, it should be noted that the towns in close

² [Women in Pakistan's Thar eye road out of poverty by snapping up truck-driving jobs \(arabnews.pk\)](#)

³ [Thari women to make history by driving 60-tonne dump trucks in coal fields - Pakistan - DAWN.COM](#)

vicinity to site (notably WAPDA colony and Kashmore town) have the potential for qualified office-based staff with the required qualifications and experience. The power industry in the area has managed to attract a number of technical and office staff for these roles.

Sukkur has a larger number of women workers in the city who are able to return home via reliable methods after working hours. The S1 Contractor has confirmed the following challenges:

- Risk of social conflict between project employees and at home.
- Mobility restrictions within the Sukkur project (i.e. from one project site to another), not just the initial commute.
- Security personnel from various organisations have notable power (including weapons).

For any site, there are safeguarding risks that must be considered and mitigated:

- SEA/SH from other workers – mitigation measures could include detailed training program, appropriate clauses in Code of Conduct, separate accommodation quarters, robust reporting mechanism.
- SEA/SH from public – mitigation could include appropriate level of security guards, CLO sessions.

Other risks of hiring women on the site include:

- Potential for social conflict.
- Unequal treatment such as lower pay, lack of promotions and discriminatory treatment / penalties compared to men.
- Social isolation of women on site.

Measures to encourage hiring of women may include:

- Ensuring job advertisements are gender neutral.
- Sessions with the local community via CLO and sociologist (ideally gender specialist) with dedicated sessions with women.
- Promotional material showing women and men working together.
- Trained HR staff.

There are further steps that the Contractors would need to take to ensure facilities are appropriate, such as:

- HR department who are well versed in requirements (such as regulation requirements).
- Gender equality and unconscious bias training for all staff, particularly those involved in hiring and promotional procedures.
- Training of all staff on SEA/SH.
- Robust reporting system for SEA/SH.
- Provision of separate gendered toilets with clear signage and appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities.
- Provision of required religious spaces.
- Review of office layout.
- Considerations for privacy.
- Review of transport facilities.
- Development of appropriate health care facilities.
- Review of team structure (e.g. separate female work crews).
- Consideration of childcare implications.

5. Conclusion & Next Steps

All parties are in agreement with the possible benefits of increasing opportunities for women workers. They have highlighted the challenges and possible mitigation measures.

It is considered that employment of women is more likely to be successful in larger numbers at Sukkur due to the higher number of people living close to the project area. It may also be easier to hire office based or technical staff as opposed to labourers due to cultural restrictions. Hiring female construction workers in the project area appears to be very rare, unless there is a dedicated social program which has been developed with appropriate considerations (including safeguarding).

The next steps are proposed:

- S1 Contractor CLO and PMO Gender advisor to undertake session in local community to assess potential opportunities for employment of women at Sukkur.
- Further meeting between PIC, PMO and S1 Contractor (HR and CLO) to discuss the opportunity and mitigation measures.
- During S1 mobilisation, S1 Contractor to consider review of supply chain and opportunities to utilise women owned businesses / businesses that support women.
- PMO and PIC to review S1 CESMP to ensure women workers is adequately covered (including safeguarding mitigation measures).
- Further positions for G2 staff to be advertised in local community at Guddu (when works will be resumed at full capacity).
- PMO and PIC to review employment statistics at both sites (local staff and gender).
- Joint outreach sessions to be undertaken in local community (e.g. in local girls school in Guddu).
- PMO and PIC to review of guidelines for equal opportunities employers.
- PMO and PIC to review of case studies for women employment in the local areas and consultation with NGOs.