

Implementation Plan

US-Pakistan Memorandum of Understanding Between the United States and Pakistan on Joint Efforts to Enable the Economic Empowerment of Women and to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship

June 2016

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif, during their October 23, 2013 meeting in Washington, D.C., expressed the importance of expanding trade and investment flows between the United States and Pakistan. Recognizing the critical importance of women's economic empowerment to boosting economic growth, trade and investment, Pakistan's Minister of Commerce and the United States' Trade Representative signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to expand women's economic opportunity in Pakistan at the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting in May 2014 in Washington, D.C. The two countries committed to developing a joint implementation plan for the MOU in consultation with the private sector and civil society to advance the goals and objectives of the MOU. The TIFA Council Meetings and Economic and Finance Working Group of the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue are intended to be the key vehicles for monitoring progress on the implementation plan.

Elements

Joint action by the United States and Pakistan on the following elements over the next two years is designed to promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment, contributing to our efforts to expand bilateral trade and investment and promote private-sector led, sustainable economic growth. To achieve equal opportunity for women, the governments of the United States and Pakistan intend to continue to empower women in the economy and promote women entrepreneurs through a series of actions described in the implementation plan. Additional actions can be added to the plan to meet the objectives outlined in the Joint MOU. The implementation plan is intended to be an evolving document that will periodically be updated by the United States and Pakistan.

Objective 1: Ensure strong interagency and inter-ministerial support for, and coordination of, policies and programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan and the promotion of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.

Activities:

- The U.S. government intends to continue to engage with the Government of Pakistan to promote women's economic empowerment, including in external trade, as a part of its efforts to expand bilateral trade and investment and promote private-sector led, sustainable economic growth.
- Both governments plan to integrate women in current and future joint initiatives and programs to foster trade and growth (business opportunities conferences, trade delegations, etc.) as listed under the U.S.-Pakistan Joint Action Plan to expand bilateral trade and investment and its associated implementation plan.
- The U.S. government seeks to continue to foster interagency coordination and support for women's economic empowerment through data calls, meetings and in preparation for bilateral dialogues.
- The U.S. government plans to encourage greater participation by women in Pakistan's political parties, their platforms, and constituent outreach through capacity-building programs, subject to the availability of funds.
- In conjunction with U.S. educational institutions, and subject to the availability of funds, the U.S. Government supports expanded higher education opportunities for women through scholarship programs for the financially disadvantaged, international exchange programs, joint research grants, and university partnerships, to seek to achieve or approach parity in granting awards to women.
- The Government of Pakistan intends to establish a *Women in the Economy Forum*, which will include private sector participants and other Government Ministries, to discuss discriminatory market and non-market barriers faced by women, particularly women entrepreneurs, in Pakistan and recommend legal and regulatory changes to the government and policy steps for the private sector. The Forum would discuss and develop solutions for the following priorities:
 - Women's access to capital, including financial inclusion;
 - Women's access to trade and labor markets;
 - Women's access to skills and capacity building;
 - Women's health, including policies related to gender-based violence and discrimination against women;
 - Women's leadership in key positions including those relating to law enforcement and rule of law;
 - Women's access to technology, including access to cell phones and the Internet; and increased participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education.
- Use future U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conferences as a mechanism to feed recommendations regarding women's economic participation to the private sector and Government of Pakistan Ministries.
- Provide quarterly reports to the U.S.-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council regarding MOU implementation progress.
- Engage Pakistani Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other stakeholders to strengthen women entrepreneurs' access to information, markets and new technology.

Objective 2: Provide women and women entrepreneurs in Pakistan with access to information about laws, regulations, policies and other official requirements for starting, running and growing businesses, including information on international trade rules, requirements and preference programs.

Activities:

- Though the Gender Equity Program, the U.S. government seeks to help improve women's access to information, justice, and economic opportunities, as well as address and prevent gender-based violence.
- Through the Let Girls Learn Initiative, the U.S. Government will work with the Government of Pakistan, civil society and private sector partners to increase access to quality education, reduce barriers to success, and empower adolescent girls. Let Girls Learn aims to benefit approximately 200,000 adolescent girls across Pakistan.
- To strengthen awareness, implementation, and enforcement of laws designed to protect the rights of women and girls, thereby enhancing their access to economic opportunities, the U.S. government plans to continue to provide technical assistance to law enforcement personnel to increase the number of female police officers and prosecutors, train public prosecutors on gender-based violence cases, and address the needs of female police officers working within Pakistani police organizations through training, providing equipment, and infrastructure assistance, subject to the availability of funds.
- The Government of Pakistan plans to increase capacity and promote adequate staffing at the Trade and Development Authority of Pakistan to assist women entrepreneurs with accessing information regarding laws, regulations and official requirements to start, run and grow a business and on international trade rules, requirements and preference programs.

Objective 3: Address and remove the impediments which women and women entrepreneurs face in starting, running and growing a business, and participating in the formal economy.

Activities:

- WECREATE|Islamabad Women's Entrepreneurship Center has developed the capacity and skills of women entrepreneurs and helped women to launch or scale up their businesses. The center continues to operate privately.
- A partnership between the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and American University (AU) in Washington DC developed a Women's Entrepreneurship Certificate Program providing tailored support to scale up women-owned businesses.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce seeks to continue to develop the capacity and skills of women's chambers of commerce and business associations through its Commercial Law Development Program subject to the availability of funds.
- USAID will seek to increase women' and women-owned businesses' involvement in the formal economy through programming to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises, enable women's access to finance, and foster agricultural development that integrates women into horticulture and livestock value chains.
- The Government of Pakistan plans to streamline business registration processes and provide access to legal services equally for all entrepreneurs.
- Both governments share a desire to promote public-private partnerships with global and local companies dedicated to entrepreneurship to foster dialogue and connectivity with women entrepreneurs. For example, the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council plans to continue to invite U.S. and Pakistani businesses that commit to adopt hiring and procurement practices that advance women's entrepreneurship and women's representation in the workplace in Pakistan to become Council members.
- Both governments share a desire to promote a "take your daughter to work" day to promote women in the economy and access to information regarding workforce participation.