



# Reaching Remote Farmers in Pakistan: How leveraging ICT can connect farmers with markets

MDF supported Telenor to provide farmers in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Chitral access to actionable, timely and relevant crop information on their mobile phones. This helps them to reach higher yields and reduce post-harvest losses.

Telenor



## The Company

Telenor is a voice, data and content mobile communications provider operating in 13 countries in Europe and Asia. In Pakistan, it acquired a GSM services license in 2004 and is one of the country's largest cellular carriers.



## The Context

In the rural areas of Pakistan, small farmers have very limited access to information. Farmers are mostly unaware of the benefits of crop planning and use outdated cultivation techniques, restricting them to low-quality inputs. Fertiliser is often used too sparingly and a lack of understanding of disease and pest control leads to low yields. Sudden weather changes can result in serious losses for farmers: this is especially true for areas like GB where unanticipated rain during picking and drying damages apricots.



## The Challenge

Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral are remote, mountainous regions in the north of Pakistan. Weather changes in these regions can be sudden and dramatic, damaging crops and affecting yields. Weak infrastructure means that efforts by businesses to reach farmers are easily frustrated. At the same time, the content provided by the Meteorological Department can be unreliable and covers too large an area to be useful in the many pockets of different weather conditions. Combined, these factors leave farmers and their families unnecessarily vulnerable.



## The Solution

Based on its analysis and understanding of the region, MDF recognised that there was potential for pro-poor growth in helping farmers to overcome these challenges. As Telenor was keen to enter into the regions of GB and Chitral and was offering a service that would address them, MDF and Telenor worked together to source the content for the free mobile agriculture advisory service - *Khushaal Zamindaar* (Prosperous Farmer) 7272.

By leveraging ICT to provide critical information, the potential benefits to farmers would be manifold. Farmers would be able to better manage weather conditions and safeguard their crops, leading to reduced post-harvest wastages. They would be able to adopt best horticulture practices and experience increased crop yields and income.

The collaboration with MDF would also support Telenor to grow market share in the region and increase customer retention, ensuring a more relevant and sustainable service for farmers.

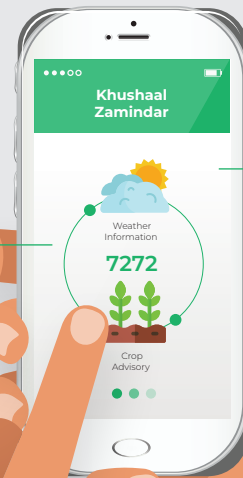
MDF's support included using its experience of GB and Chitral to help Telenor research regional constraints and make sure its content was targeted towards its users.

The service was disseminated among small-holder farmers in GB and Chitral in August 2017. As a smart phone is not needed to access the service, a wide range of subscribers can access the information free of cost on their mobile phones. Telenor also airs a weekly radio show featuring agricultural experts, who discuss issues and take questions from live callers.

## The Results



**128,042** farmers reached in GB and Chitral through Telenor's *Khushaal Zamindaar* 7272 service.



**78,594** farmers have used information provided through the crop advisory service.



## Quote from the field

Sher Wali, a potato farmer from Chitral, shared:



*Last year I lost 1000 kgs of potatoes in rain, worth PKR 20,000. Now I listen to Telenor's 7272 service daily and plan my cultivation and harvest accordingly. This season, I planned timely harvesting as per the rain forecast and avoided any losses.*

