

Pro-Poor Growth Story

Nutritious fodder

Feeding livestock and benefitting households

Improving the quality of fodder that farmers provide to their animals was a key focus area for the MDF Pakistan program. Following the highly successful intervention with Farm Dynamics Pakistan (FDP) between 2017 and 2019, in which MDF supported the partner to introduce 1kg bags of nutritious rye and Rhodes grass fodder to farmers in South Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan, MDF set out to expand the work through a series of farmer awareness sessions in 2021.



L to R: Hussain Shah, Mir Din Shah, Asif Ali, Abdul Qayyum



Shared roles in agriculture

In Gilgit-Baltistan, both men and women are active participants in agricultural labour and rearing livestock. Generally, women are charged with feeding and milking animals while men are responsible for the market transactions of buying and selling livestock, inputs and dairy products. The income generated is generally shared among all the members of the household. As a result of MDF's initial intervention with FDP, farmers earned an average income of around USD680 (AUD953) per year. These earnings were primarily spent on household expenses and children's education. Nutritious fodder leads to healthier animals, increases milk and meat production, and improves household nutrition. Between 2017 and 2019, MDF assessed that 18,247 female and male farmers benefitted from the intervention with FDP. Many farmers also reported a reduced workload, as Rhodes and rye grass are multi-cut fodder, where one sowing can yield up to eight cuts of fodder.



Expanding impact through awareness

In 2021, MDF supplemented this initial intervention with a series of awareness sessions conducted for farmers in Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. By hosting 20 events across the regions, Farm Dynamics Pakistan was able to reach 800 farmers, including both men and women. The educational meetings provided information on how to effectively grow the grass varieties, as well as the business and household benefits of using nutritious fodder. MDF supported FDP to develop a multi-channel strategy, using both standard text messaging and social media, to reach a broader audience. After the sessions, FDP sent SMS messages to participants to reinforce the information shared as well as created short promotional videos that were shared on Facebook.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, Local Support Organisations (LSOs) and farmer cooperatives are important community-based initiatives that assist farmers with accessing agricultural inputs and helpful information. In the informative meetings, FDP involved farmer cooperatives representatives so they could build the community's awareness of their services. The collaboration hoped to drive seed demand through the network of nearly 200 cooperatives existing in the regions. Women are active members and leaders of several cooperatives. The LSOs and cooperatives were also offered ryegrass and alfalfa seeds at a discounted rate so the benefit could be passed on directly to farmers, avoiding the additional expense of intermediaries.

Afshan Bibi is a livestock farmer who started using ryegrass when FDP, supported by MDF, introduced it in 2017. FDP invited her to the awareness sessions to share her real-world examples of how nutritious fodder can transform farm earnings.



Initially, I had one milking animal. After I started feeding it rye grass, its milk yield increased and I was able to save from the extra income I earned. I now have three cows and I feed them rye grass. I grow it on my own and I can even save the extra for the winter season.

Afshan Bibi,
Aliabad, Gilgit-Baltistan.

Some women, such as Gulfam Pari, are new to the initiative but are keen to implement the practices at their own farms.



I had heard about rye grass a little bit, but after attending the session, I am much more aware of its nutritional benefits. So I want to invest in rye grass to increase the milk yield of my animals and improve their health, which will also result in more income for me soon. I will also spread the word among my neighbours so they can also benefit from it.

Gulfam Pari,
Nomal, Gilgit-Baltistan.

Enhancing MDF's early intervention by implementing the awareness sessions not only helped local farmers but it was also a highly successful strategy for the partner. According to FDP, more than 80 per cent of the farmers who attended these events recognise the benefit of improved animal feed. The business sold over 4,000 packets of Rhodes and rye grass through the sessions alone. This translates to fodder grown on almost 4,000 additional kanals, or 500 acres, of land. Coupling the information about the fodder and its benefits with an established track-record of successful animal health and yields has proven successful for FDP's business.



Aliabad [Gilgit-Baltistan] has a significant number of large and small ruminants. However, there is a fodder shortage issue and hence the productivity of our animals is low. FDP's session on rye grass were useful, and I will grow it on some of my land. The thing I like the most about this fodder is that it can grow in extreme environments and without pesticides.

Ali Madad,
Vice President of Phamol Agriculture Society, Aliabad.

With farmers cooperatives and LSOs enabling enhanced fodder practices by sharing information widely and selling the fodder at an affordable price, FDP and MDF expect animal health and yields to continue improving, resulting in long-term benefits for more rural households.