



# Humanitarian Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

## Project Review Report

**HELP Foundation, District Rajanpur, Punjab Pakistan**

www.helpfoundation.pk, info@helpfoundation-pakistan.org, +92 604 317806, +92 333 9446363

## ABREVATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DA	DA
DPOs	Disabled Person Organisations
DRT	Document Review Technique
DWL	Daily-Wage Labourers
DWW	Domestic Women Workers
EAD	Economic Affairs Division, Federal Ministry of Finance
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office
EECP	Ehsaas Emergency Cash programme
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FGIs	Focus Group Interviews
GP	General Public
HF	HELP Foundation
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IDEA	Initiative for Development & Empowerment Axis
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
KII	Key Informant Interview
LHA	Localisation of Humanitarian Action
LHDP	LAAR Humanitarian and Development Programme
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NOC	Non-Objection Certificate
OFDA	Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance
OWM	Older Women and Men
PO	Purchase Order
PS	Project Staff (Full Time Employees)
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TG	TG
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

HELP Foundation is a rights-based local civil society organisation working in District Rajanpur since 1976. HELP foundation has recently implemented COVID-19 humanitarian response project in the District with financial support from Start Network. The Overall Objective of Humanitarian Action was to contribute to the Government's preventative and mitigating efforts around COVID-19 pandemic. The primary stakeholders were (1) Older women and men, (2) People with disabilities, (3) Domestic women workers, (4) Daily-wage labourers, (5) TG(TG) persons, (6) DA (DA), (7) General Public (GP), and (8) Team members of HELP Foundation.

HELP Foundation undertook a post-Project Review study. The study was primarily "exploratory research," and it offers insights into various humanitarian interventions. The specific objectives of the research were to (1) identify vital lessons, best practices and critical issues, (2) assess whether the Project was in line with local needs and priorities as well as the donor funding strategy, (3) evaluate if the humanitarian activities of a short-term (45 days) ensured cognisance of longer-term and interconnected problems into account, and finally (4) review the extent to which Project achieved its purpose within the stipulated time frame of 45 days.

An independent consultant, selected through the bidding process, undertook the field research. The study used a rights-based framework for data collection, analysis and reporting. The consultant used research techniques of Document Review Technique (DRT), Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Interviews (FGI). The consultant collected information from primary and secondary data sources.

The review report has key findings in four sections of (1) lessons learnt & best practices, (2) Relevance with the local needs and effectiveness, (3) connectedness, and finally (4) comparative overview of (planned versus achieved) the Project milestones.

In the first section, the lessons learnt and best practices are around efforts of the HELP Foundation to be relevant, especially in situations where it has no funding, external support or even hope of securing funds. The section provides insights into non-monetary ways to influence and create space within the humanitarian sphere. COVID-19 is a new type of hazard, and every stakeholder learnt its lessons while dealing with its impact or responding to the needs of people. The humanitarian situation offered an opportunity to HELP Foundation to improvise and innovate various solutions which were previously untested. There are numbers of valuable best practices and lesson around maintaining membership and partnership within the Start Network. The HELP Foundation experimented with digital platforms and learnt some of the lessons for effective use of digital technology in future. During implementation, the HELP Foundation discovered organisational strengths and weaknesses which it can effectively use to develop Programme in follow up of the current Project. The section also provides information about the best practices and lessons learnt around managing fake news, rumours, awareness campaigns and benefits of instituting pragmatic monitoring framework from the planning phase of the Project.

The second section on relevance and effectiveness outlines the evolution of the pandemic in the District. Upon realisation of the seriousness and magnitude of the crisis, district officials invited NGOs and INGOs for assistance in the humanitarian response, but the help did not come as per expectations. The district officials distributed the donated food and in-kind gifts received from the local philanthropists. It appears that the Government did not spend its resources on the distribution of food or hygiene items. Once the fear of death subsided, the nature of the humanitarian crisis gradually transformed from health emergency to a severe economic crisis.

Rajanpur was already a low-income District in the Province. The pandemic enlarged destitution and poverty. Though Government and local philanthropists distributed cash and in-kind support, their assistance left glaring gaps, and destitute families fell through the cracks. HELP Foundation included such families in the Project besides having TG persons as a category of beneficiaries and distributed raw food and hygiene items to them.

Due to existing loans and financial obligations on low-income families, cash distribution was an inappropriate intervention. There was a high probability that the cash would have gone to settle the loans or to pay the utility bills. Food items increased control and access of women over food and contributed to enhancing their influence.

Majority of the beneficiaries already knew before attending awareness-raising sessions conducted by the HELP Foundation that “washing hands with soap for 20 seconds” was an effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the beneficiaries did not frequently wash their hands or wash them with soap. The availability of soap and facemasks enabled beneficiaries and their families to use the soap and wear the masks. The use of soap was high compared to the use of face masks.

The funding from the Start Network helped the organisation to address under-funded needs, fill the gaps, assist vulnerable groups and prevent further spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 pandemic gradually decreased in District Rajanpur, and by the end of the Project, Government lifted the general lockdown, markets reopened, and life was slowly returning to normal at the time of the review. COVID-19 did not spread rampantly in the District as was feared. However, we cannot attribute slow spread and decrease of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Project’s interventions mainly because of the small scale of the intervention compared to needs and scale of the humanitarian crisis albeit interventions were highly relevant in the local context.

The third section on the connectedness (sustainability) of humanitarian work contains information about continuity of Project’s benefits for the beneficiaries. HELP Foundation was cognizant about the implications of its 45 days humanitarian Project for its long term development and campaigning work in the District. During the implementation of the Start Network funded Project, the organisation built on the existing experience and further expanded scope of its social mobilisation to the urban areas besides working with new categories of beneficiaries such as DWWs and TG communities.

HELP Foundation responded to the humanitarian crisis of COVID-19, but its engagement did not end with the completion of relief work. Instead, it has continued commitment with the rural and urban communities and is currently further building on the relationships that it created during the relief phase. The hygiene promotional work started by the HELP Foundation during the Project was still intact at the time of Project review. However, the HELP Foundation lacks the resources to further distribute facemask, sanitisers or soaps along with the dissemination of hygiene messages.

Project activities mainly were the distribution of food and non-food items besides hygiene promotion. The provision of free food was too small to make a negative impact on the food supply chain in the District or distort market prices. It is also highly unlikely that the availability of food for 30 days for a few families will result in discouraging the farmers from producing their food.

COVID-19 has not yet ended though the Project has finished. At the time of review, HELP Foundation was exploring possibilities of resourcing economic recovery Programme through local resource mobilisation and donor funds.

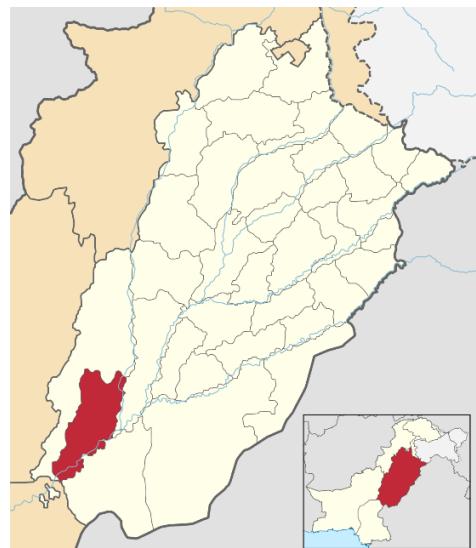
The fourth section provides information about the Project's targets and contains tabulated data. HELP Foundation carried out the entire committed Project activities within the planned duration and budget.

## 2.0 Background

HELP Foundation is a local NGO working in South Punjab since 1976. It started as a self-help community group and grew into a professional organisation over the years. It works at the Policy, Campaigning and Programme levels for the rights of children, women and men living in poverty and flood-prone areas. The organisation believes that the rights-based approach empowers marginalised groups, brings attention to inequality, and boosts State and donor's accountability. HELP Foundation always contributed to promoting democratic values, voices of the weak and invisible people. It assisted communities in achieving self-reliance and greater integration with the Government Institutions. The organisation prides in linking local communities, especially women and excluded groups, with the Government. It is a platform organisation where Government, civil society organisations, activists and private businesses interact with each other in a frank, open, comfortable and safe environment.

HELP Foundation has worked with the financial assistance of EU, ECHO, DIPECHO, Dutch Government, UNDP and OFDA. It has currently implemented a relief project in District Rajanpur in response to prevailing COVID-19's situation with the financial assistance from the Start Network.

As part of the Project Plan, HELP Foundation proposed review after completion of the Project activities. It engaged a third-party consultant to review the Project processes. HELP Foundation also made efforts to invite the peer organisations for a joint review and four organisations committed<sup>1</sup>. Due to unexpected high floods, the organisations were busy in the humanitarian response and could not participate in the review process at the field level.



However, the HELP Foundation shared the first draft of the report with the four peer organisations for review, comments and input. We hope that the result will strengthen the agenda of advocating and promoting Localisation of Humanitarian Action (LHA) in Pakistan's context.

The consultant conducted Project Review and collected data from Primary and Secondary data sources from September 1 to 23, 2020. The consultant managed the date from informants and held focus group interviews from September 14 to 19, 2020. The information and analysis are primarily from the consultant.

<sup>1</sup>Doaba Foundation (DF), LAAR Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP), Initiative for Development & Empowerment Axis (IDEA), and Bright Star Development Organisation.

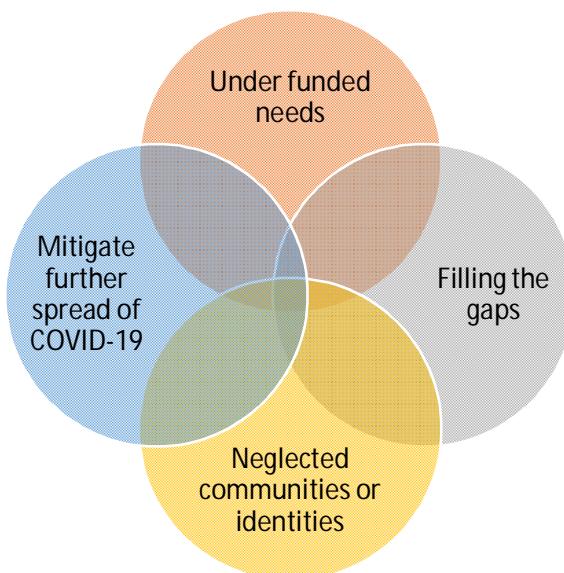
### **3.0 Details of Humanitarian Action**

HELP Foundation implemented the Project in District Rajanpur. The District is one of the impoverished districts of the Punjab province. The people are vulnerable to floods, hill torrents, locust swarm attacks and other climatic hazards such as abnormal or untimely high or low rains. In proportion to its population, Rajanpur has the highest number of COVID-19 cases in South Punjab. COVID-19 is not only a health disaster, but it also turned into a severe financial emergency. COVID-19 epidemic significantly reduced the capacity of excluded and vulnerable groups to access food and other basic needs.

The Start Network financed Humanitarian Action proposed by the HELP Foundation on the following considerations:

1. HELP Foundation should respond to the under-funded needs arising from COVID-19 pandemic.
2. HELP Foundation should fill gaps in the existing responses of Public Health and Government Structures, funding mechanisms and other NGO responses.
3. HELP Foundation should assist vulnerable groups that no organisation previously identified or covered (neglected communities or identities).
4. HELP Foundation should work to mitigate further spread of COVID-19 by implementing public awareness campaigns around preventative measures.

Figure 1: Core Consideration of Start Network



The Overall Project Objective was to contribute to the Government's preventing and mitigating efforts around COVID-19 pandemic. The Project contained three results. These were to reduce food insecurity, prevent the spread of COVID-19 and promote health &hygiene among the poor and vulnerable groups. The primary direct beneficiaries were (1) older women & men, (2) children, women and men with disabilities, (3) domestic women workers, (4) daily-wage labourers working in congested areas like fruit & vegetable markets, and (5) TG people.

The project activities included (1) hygiene promotion, (2) distribution of food packs and hygiene kits to **400 families**, (3) a mass awareness campaign, (4) coordination and networking with other humanitarian actors, and (5) end of Project review study to identify vital lessons learnt and best practices for incremental programming around mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

The duration of the action was **45 days** starting from July 28, 2020. The approved of the action budget was **GBP 29,980.32**.

## **4.0 Key Findings**

The staff, volunteers and management of HELP Foundation considered the Project in the broader perspective of HELP Foundation's "Humanitarian Programme" for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the organisational cognitive framework, the donation from the Start Network is part of an overall Humanitarian Programme of HELP Foundation. Therefore, the main findings captured in the current report represent the holistic Humanitarian Programme of HELP Foundation with particular focus on the Start Network funded Project.

The main discoveries are in four sections of (1) lessons learnt & best practices, (2) relevance, appropriateness and efficiency, (3) connectedness, and finally (4) comparative overview of (planned versus achieved) the Project milestones.

### **4.1 Lessons Learnt and Best Practices (Objective No. 1)**

The consultant conducted an orientation workshop about the rationale and process of collecting lessons learnt and best practices. The staff, management and volunteers of the HELP Foundation participated in the workshop. Please see Annex-01 for the presentation and handouts of the workshop. The team of HELP Foundation, including senior management, volunteers, activists and the consultant approached the discussion around "lessons learnt and best practices" from the learning perspective.

**Here are the main learning points:**

#### **4.1.1 Doing nothing is NOT an option**

HELP Foundation was on a steep learning curve during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic. The Government announced blanket lockdown of shops, markets, gatherings, social events and offices. After one week, the organisation decided to open its office to evaluate the situation. HELP Foundation board and senior management found it unacceptable to "see the suffering and do nothing." The staff took precautionary measures in the light of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the Punjab Government and opened the office with restricted visitors. After internal discussions, the organisation decided to undertake registration of the beneficiaries who required assistance; though there was no donor or financial support available. HELP Foundation also devised and rehearsed verbal messages to manage people's expectations during the assessment. HELP Foundation completed the registration of more than 500 vulnerable families in need of assistance by the end of the second week of the lockdown. The staff, volunteers and management of HELP Foundation (1) knew how to undertake humanitarian assessment and (2) what were the essential questions to ask from the perspective of key stakeholders (e.g., Government and donors). HELP Foundation amended the existing questionnaires, consolidated some questions and came up with a new assessment

questionnaire for COVID-19. It started the beneficiary registration process from the town (urban setting) where it had not worked before<sup>2</sup>. To avoid delay and inconsistent data, the organisation used digital Google Survey Forms. Through the use of a digital platform, HELP Foundation skipped the delay between information collection, tabulation and presentation of the final report.

#### **4.1.2 Dilemma of humanitarian space**

COVID-19 was a new fangled humanitarian crisis for the humanitarian community. The spread of COVID-19 crippled the head offices of INGOs (located mainly in Europe and North America), and their respective offices in Islamabad were “clueless about the role of the humanitarian organisations” in the pandemic. Moreover, when the Government imposed a blanket lockdown, it provided plausible grounds for the humanitarian organisations to do fence-sitting during the initial weeks of the crisis. There was plenty of humanitarian space and also a desire from the Government departments, especially at the District level, to involve civil society organisations. HELP Foundation started working by following the SOPs of the Punjab Government; DA appreciated the decision of the HELP Foundation. The administration also asked HELP Foundation to provide advice and technical support in response strategy of the Government.

The situation would have been different if it was a mega flood or other natural disasters. A flock of international humanitarian organisations would have descended, making everything costlier, complicated and challenging. It was due to the nature of COVID-19 that international organisations did not open offices in the District. However, the flipside of the issue was inadequate humanitarian assistance as the Government and humanitarian organisations failed to provide humanitarian aid to at least 20% of the affected population (propionate humanitarian response).

HELP Foundation team identified that there is a need for systematic organisational thinking within HELP Foundation and allocation of resources around “how to remain **relevant** to the beneficiaries, donors, Government and other vital humanitarian stakeholders during substantial humanitarian crises? How to **mobilise resources** (goods, services and cash) from philanthropists and conscientious businesses not only in Pakistan but also from the diaspora, global digital platforms and responsible businesses in the friendly countries like the UK, Canada, Turkey and China?”

#### **4.1.3 Power of information and technical capacity**

After completion of the initial survey and registration of the beneficiaries, HELP Foundation consolidated the data and sent the report to the District Government, Social Welfare Department and Labour Department. Meanwhile, the District Government received a donation

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<sup>2</sup>HELP Foundation has traditionally been working with the rural communities, especially those which are vulnerable to floods.

of 500 food packs from Ghousia Ghee Industries (Private) Limited for the poor and needy people. The DA wanted to distribute the food pack without attracting negative media attention, allegations of nepotism and favours. When the DA saw assessment of HELP Foundation, it invited the organisation for the consultations. The responsibility of selecting beneficiaries was on the HELP Foundation, and DA could hold it accountable in case of undeserving beneficiaries in the list.

District Rajanpur is a vast district, and the administration could have distributed the packs anywhere, but they were concerned about the eligibility criteria and negative press coverage. They had no systematic assessment available except HELP Foundation's document, and from their prior interaction with the organisation, they knew that the organisation was local and credible. The administration finally decided that it would take time for the Revenue Department to identify low-income families; therefore, they would use the information provided by the HELP Foundation. The administration also requested the HELP Foundation to assist in the organised distribution of food packs and formally approved the list of beneficiaries submitted by the HELP Foundation. HELP Foundation produced 500 tokens based on Google Spreadsheet for the DA to sign and approve.

Each token contained the beneficiary name, citizenship number, eligibility criteria, date & time and venue of distribution. Moreover, the organisation also provided complete address and directions for the venue on the back of the token. It was a good practice, and the HELP Foundation will continue doing it in future. HELP Foundation volunteers distributed the passes by the evening.

HELP Foundation opposed the deployment of armed Police and other security forces at the distribution point. The administration declined the request. In the past DA used to announce in public about the distribution and on the day of distribution, thousands of people always showed up. However, due to the distribution of tokens and avoiding general announcements, only the beneficiaries came to the distribution points.

The army came and marked the circles on the ground where each beneficiary stood. Each token holder came forward and collected the food pack and left from the other end. The role of HELP Foundation included (1) identification & registration of beneficiaries, (2) distribution of token, (3) designing of the distribution point, (4) marking the handing over of pack and (5) submitting the distribution forms to the DA for the record. By the end of the distribution, the HELP Foundation provided a verified list of 500 beneficiaries who received the food packs. The Government provided labour for handling the food packs and maintained security of distribution venue. The administration was overwhelmed with joy after the distribution because of the organised and orderly processes. The District got positive press coverage. The Punjab Chief Minister sent the video clip of distribution to all the DAs in Punjab province and asked to organise similar orderly distributions.

Moreover, the Chief Minister also sent an encouraging message to the DA on the "good work."HELP Foundation created a situation where DA earned a positive reputation among the

senior political and military leadership. As a result, the HELP Foundation also strengthened its goodwill with DA.

The best practice to constructively engage with the Government in Punjab's context is to understand Government's imperatives, challenges, situation and gaps during the humanitarian crises and extend tailored made assistance for creating a win-win situation. Once humanitarian actors have credibility and trust with the Government, the Government also "listens" to their concerns and act on the feedback.

#### **4.1.4 Improvise, improvise and improvise**

The masks and sanitisers disappeared from the local market. The organisation's vocational centre prepared face masks by following the SOPs. The raw materials came from the general pool fund of the organisation. HELP Foundation manufactured 2,000 masks within three days. The organisation started awareness meetings (by keeping social space), and after each session, the volunteers handed over the protective face covers. It is a good practice to combine awareness session with the distribution of tangible items such as soaps or facemasks. The generalised distribution of facemasks did not happen. HELP Foundation linked distribution of facemasks with the awareness-raising sessions.

HELP Foundation has an inventory of humanitarian stocks since 2007, which is well-maintained and timely replenished. HELP Foundation had water tanks, sinks and soaps available in the store. Within the first month of the lockdown, HELP Foundation installed five water tanks with sinks at public places for handwashing and initially also provided soaps (consumable). The activity was a low-cost and high impact. It built profile and influence of the HELP Foundation within the urban area and also with the DA.

The best practice, according to the team, is to think about solutions with the existing resources instead of "what should be the ideal solution?" It is also an excellent practice to maintain an inventory of essential non-food items. Instead of waiting for funding, humanitarian organisations should improvise and participate in the humanitarian response narrative at the district level. The most inexpensive activities are (1) establishing an information hub primarily for the humanitarian organisations, including donors and (2) undertaking awareness-raising sessions. If the organisation has non-food items, it can significantly improve the quality of awareness sessions (by enabling people to use the newly gained awareness).

#### **4.1.5 Partnership with the Start Network**

HELP Foundation had applied for the membership of Start Network, and its application was in the process. The focus of Start Network was on flood, drought and heatwave emergencies. By the time Start Network approved the membership of the four local NGOs including HELP Foundation, COVID-19 was in full swing. The member organisations requested for the financial support for responding to the pandemic, but initially, Start Network declined the request.

However, with the hike COVID-19 and public profiling of the crisis, the Network approved small funding.

Local and International NGOs have a history of funding competition among themselves and with each other. The best practice that Start Network promoted was to avoid competition and subsequent bitterness among the tier-2 organisations and with other INGOs by allocating resources and requesting for a high-quality proposal to access them. The funding strategy and mechanism helped in building cooperation and trust not only among the local NGOs and also with the International NGOs.

The Economic Affairs Division (EAD) has the condition of a “donor guarantee letter” for issuing NOC, whereas donors require NOC from the Government for approval of the Proposal at the first place. Neither the donors nor the Government is willing to understand the current humanitarian aid architect. The situation is circular in nature (like a chicken-egg debate). The international donors consider issuing formal funding guarantee letter without Government’s NOC as a high-risk probability. As a general practice, INGOs obtain formal guarantee letters usually from their head offices or other Western affiliates; whereas local NGOs often end-up paying bribes or using informal power channels for obtaining NOCs. Start Network was listening and comprehending the access issues of local organisations in Pakistan, and it issued a formal guarantee letter to the HELP Foundation before the formal approval of the Project Proposal. Based on the document, the HELP Foundation secured NOC on time. Start Network should continue the good practice of listening and understanding the operational realities of local NGOs.

HELP Foundation considers it strategic for its organisational interest to maintain its current membership in the Start Network. The organisation is looking forward to participating in the capacity building trajectory of the Network. The staff, volunteers and management see engagement with the Start Network as empowering and highly beneficial for the strategic interest of the local communities, District Government and organisation. While elaborating about the way forward, the team proposed that Start Network may consider having small and flexible institutional capacity building funding for the duration of at least two years with HELP Foundation and other local NGOs. The relationship will enable HELP Foundation to secure a long-term NOC from EAD, and NOC will allow the organisation to further engage with the other donors. Though Start Network is a membership body and HELP Foundation is its member at tier 2, the Start Network may also make efforts to learn “how to continue and maintain its partnering relationship besides short-term humanitarian funding with the local NGOs?”

Start Network invested in improving knowledge of HELP Foundation about working of the Network, formats, documentation, requirements, how to raise an alert, and other operational issues. HELP Foundation team felt that the briefing enabled them to understand the criteria entirely and resulted in an effective and efficient humanitarian response. The practice of induction should continue in future.

The other best practice that HELP Foundation identified is about the nature of the partnering relationship in which HELP Foundation is not the sub-contractor but a member of the Network.

There is a qualitative difference between sub-contracting and being a member of the Network. HELP Foundation has ownership of the Network and considers it as an obligation for the organisation to make the Network successful as a whole. HELP Foundation thinks that the local, provincial and national humanitarian issues will get attention at the global level through the efforts of the Network.

HELP Foundation team, volunteers and senior leadership think that they have a challenge of building trust and credibility with the management and general membership of the Network. They believe that it is a new relationship and like any other relationships, it needs time and efforts on the part of both the entities to build goodwill and social capital. HELP Foundation team made efforts to remain open and forthcoming in sharing information, documents, pictures and other details with the relevant persons in the Network. As per its understanding, the HELP Foundation team made efforts to enable and institute remote monitoring mechanisms for the Start Network. The organisation shared information with the Start Network virtually in real-time and offered for live streaming of the awareness sessions and distribution processes. The efforts on the part of the HELP Foundation are best practices, and the organisation should continue with a similar openness with other sensitised and reasonable donors.

HELP Foundation team pointed out that they would have clearly articulated the need for building mutual trust at the beginning of funding relationship with the Start Network. Though HELP Foundation made efforts, Start Network, in the opinion of the team, did not reciprocate with the trust-building steps. It was perhaps due to the cultural differences in which Start Network team (mainly having Anglo-Saxon cultural background) could not reckon the “unspoken” expectation of trust-building on the part of HELP Foundation. The lesson learnt for the team is to communicate important messages explicitly in future and outline mutual expectations clearly. HELP Foundation team felt that Start Network hired third-party evaluators who created management challenges by directly contacting beneficiaries and raising their hopes for the next round of assistance. Start Network would have managed third party post-monitoring evaluation in an improved manner if it had discussed it with HELP Foundation in advance and requested input in the ToRs, questions, etc.

#### **4.1.6 Approvals and transfer of funds**

The Project Proposal format and other paperwork requirements of the Start Network were accessible. HELP Foundation faced no difficulty in providing the information on the form. Start Network should maintain the current simplicity of the documents in future and should not make them bigger, more complex.

Pakistan is currently in the grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The State Bank of Pakistan introduces new regulations every week to satisfy FATF. It happened with other INGOs and local NGOs that the banks held their international remittances for months. Once the State Bank has “suspected” remittances in the system, it takes efforts and often months to get the release of funds. As a good practice, Start Network sent **GBP 10** before transferring the entire Project Budget.

The automation system of the State Bank withheld the transfer of GBP 10. HELP Foundation actively engaged with their local bank and provided the required paper work which HELP Foundation had already kept ready in advance. Even every document was ready; it took HELP Foundation three working days to secure the release of GBP 10. The automation system registered the necessary details of the remittance sender and receiver. After successful transfer of GBP 10, HELP Foundation sent a green signal to Start Network to send the entire amount. The State Bank released the amount on the same day because the details of organisations sending and receiving funds were already verified and updated in the system. HELP Foundation did not know, however, for how long State Bank keeps the verified status intact? It may help Foundation to plan the transfer of remittances with improved efficiency in future.

It is a best practice for Start Network especially for the countries in the grey list to send an insignificant amount (like 10 GBP) so that the local partner could arrange the necessary documents and approvals. Moreover, the local partners should also actively put in place the required documents (for examples, NOC from EAD, etc.) even before the processing of the small transfer. The steps will significantly increase capacity and probability of completing the humanitarian action in 45 days.

#### **4.1.7 Procurement of project materials and services**

HELP Foundation's internal rules required open tendering for the purchases above one million Pak Rupees (approximately 4,700 GBP). HELP Foundation knew that it has to start distribution of relief materials within the seven days after approval of the Project. Therefore, the organisation advertised the tender in Daily Jang ten days before the Start Network's funding agreement. By the time, Start Network formally approved and transferred funds; HELP Foundation was at the stage of issuing Purchase Order (PO). Before approving PO, the team and volunteers of HELP Foundation visited the warehouse of the selected vendor to verify the quantity and quality of the available materials. The experience of the HELP Foundation demonstrated that the local suppliers are the best when it comes to quality, accountability and timely dispute resolution. The local vendors often accept a delay in payments because they knew that the supplies for helping the poor and needy. Therefore, it is also an excellent practice to prefer local suppliers/vendors in future.

HELP Foundation invited registered beneficiaries as member of the Procurement Committee. Their input, especially comments on the quality of the samples, made it possible for the HELP Foundation to procure relevant and appropriate food and hygiene items. It is a good practice to invite beneficiaries as part of the Procurement Committee to comment and select the suitable and proper items from a wide range of samples.

Due to budgetary constraints, the organisation asked vendors to give rates based on the distribution points. Though distribution points were easy to plan at tender formulation phase, it was challenging to come up with the exact number of beneficiaries for each distribution point.

The vendors were confused. Moreover, when vendors supplied items at the distribution points, it took hard work on the part of the HELP Foundation staff and volunteers to inspect each food and hygiene pack physically. Moreover, at some distribution points, the supplier could not provide the packages on the agreed time, and subsequently planning chain negative impacted. Through daily reviews, HELP Foundation team identified the Challenge and improvised through engaging some storage space (without incurring cost to the Project) and negotiated with the vendor to provide transportation from temporary storage to the distribution points on the morning of the distribution day. Therefore, the lesson learnt is that in future HELP Foundation should factor in temporary pre-distribution storage & secondary transportation costs in the budget. Though these costs are insignificant, the implication is high for efficient (staff time & efforts), timely and orderly distributions.

At the time of tendering, HELP Foundation included the cost of packaging in the tender. However, it did not mention the required specifications of the packaging for food and non-food items. The supplier provided food items in sacks. The sacks are easy to carry, and traditionally relief organisations pack food items in the bags. In feedback obtained from the beneficiaries, it came to the light that the organisation should not provide food items in sacks in future though it is easy for the recipients to carry loads. In the case of bags, the weight is directly on the food items. For example, packs of lentils, salt and sugar may rupture; making it highly complicated for the beneficiaries to separate them. The heavyweight of sacks may also broke the biscuits in pieces. **The lesson is that the food packs should be in cartons or recycled plastic baskets/crates.**

The design of cartons or plastic baskets should also be looked into to make it easier to carry from the distribution point to home. The specification of packaging materials should be part of the tender description. While describing the specification of a carton or plastic basket or crate, the organisation should provide calculations of the approximate pressure of each cartoon in Pascals; surface area of the bottom of the carton and the approximate force that would be exerted by a filled carton in Newton units. The specification may help the potential suppliers to come up with the appropriate design of carton or plastic basket. HELP Foundation should further research to find a cost-effective solution for food item packaging.

HELP Foundation has institutionalised procurement processes which evolved through the practice of years. HELP Foundation also had the institutional capacity and confidence to undertake the procurement steps and ensure that all costs are eligible by the end of the day. It is also a best practice to reduce the threshold levels and make one's organisational procedures in line with the procurement of materials and services processes for the different donors. HELP Foundation did not come up with the system overnight; instead, it developed organically through practice, lessons learnt and incremental improvement.

According to the views of the staff and volunteers, the best way to achieve value-for-money is not the centralised procurement like UNICEF for other international organisations. HELP Foundation opposed the idea of centralised procurement for all members of the Start Network during or before an emergency. In its opinion, it is mainly a perception that centralised procurement leads to an economy of scale, and organisations can get better value-for-money.

In reality, such practice promotes imbalance of power relationship between the donor and “implementing partners” besides resulting in (1) the purchase of low-quality items with high prices, (2) little accountability of suppliers, (3) corruption and (4) significant delays.

HELP Foundation highlighted that it is impossible to run laboratory tests on the supplied items before their distribution to the beneficiaries to ensure quality. The main reason is time pressure—the best way forward is to identify reputed brands and products during the year and select them for quality assurance.

It is a best practice to start the procurement process before the approval of the Project; though organisations cannot (and should not) issue POs before the formal endorsement of the donor. Start Network requires distribution of relief materials within the seven days from the day of a funding agreement.

***The following are the suggestions for improving efficiency:***

1. The local NGOs members of the Start Network may undertake a pre-qualification process of the vendors to make sure that they are distributing relief items within the seven days of the projects' approval.
2. Start Network may consider preparing a technical guidance note and arranging training session on Pre-qualification processes of the vendors and service providers under its capacity building trajectory.
3. Start Network may prepare an annual calendar of the pre-qualification process for floods, droughts and heatwaves and may ask its tier-2 organisations to complete the pre-qualification processes by a given deadline. It will provide ample time to Start Network to review the *Procurement Dossier* of every local member NGO to ensure that it is in line with the instructions of the back donors.
4. Start Network may explore with the large manufacturing firms of food, hygiene and other consumable items for the procurement of “branded” relief items on significantly concessional (manufacturing) rates during humanitarian crises in Pakistan. The firms may also be enthusiastic about forging a partnership with Start Network for their improved branding and advertising campaigns. HELP Foundation has a small size and scope. Its scale is unattractive for the large manufacturing firms, and it may not be able to have concessional prices. Therefore, the help of Start Network will be invaluable.

#### **4.1.8 When everyone needed assistance: What did we do and learn?**

COVID-19 created a situation when everyone in society needed some assistance. The economic activities seized, and people were dependent on their savings and reserves. The poor people quickly depleted their savings and social capital by asking for loans, support and

alms from others who were also in a difficult situation. HELP Foundation reflected at the planning level and decided that it will focus on the following three considerations:

1. The most vulnerable people who were on the edge of survival, and it was difficult for them to get support from the Government or other organisations due to any reason.
2. The people who were vulnerable to further spread of disease by working in crowded places.
3. Improve resources and awareness among the people for (a) frequent handwashing and (b) maintaining social distance.

The best practice on the part of the HELP Foundation is to collectively decide and own their targeting strategy at the planning phase based on the consideration of humanitarian imperative and needs of the vulnerable people.

***The following are three lessons learnt for the HELP Foundation:***

1. HELP Foundation wanted to improve quality programming work with the PWDs because they had become extremely vulnerable. However, the team did not explore dimensions of disability with the use of a tailored-made checklist. The lesson learned for the HELP Foundation is to improve the capacity of the volunteers in using the Washington Group Questions on Disability during the humanitarian assessment.
2. HELP Foundation included TG as one of the vulnerable categories, but it lacked the experience of working with them. When the team interacted with TG people, the team did not know how to relate, and it was entirely unprepared to manage social interaction. TG persons have a closed community, kinship terms, secret language and idiosyncrasies. It was a learning experience for the staff to manage the frequent and explicit demands of TG people for cash<sup>3</sup>. They pressed the HELP Foundation to pay for electricity bills and house rents. Despite receiving the food packs, when asked by the Government officials, the TG beneficiaries of the Project initially denied on the expectation that by denying they would receive additional food packs from the Government.

While distributing hygiene kits, Help Foundation learnt from the TG beneficiary feedback that the sanitary pads included in the kit was “useless” for TG people. They lived in TG households and did not need the cloth. Some TG beneficiaries also mocked team of HELP Foundation for including the pads in hygiene kits of TGs. When HELP Foundation requested them to return the sanitary cloths, they reported that they sent the pads to their relatives' families for the use and the HELP Foundation could not recover hygienic pads.

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<sup>3</sup>In the local context, demanding cash or assistance in straight forward language is culturally rude.

In future, if HELP Foundation wants to work with TG people and their groups in the humanitarian and development projects, it needs to learn their (a) gender (and sex) specific needs (b) community ethics, (c) basic knowledge of their secret language, and (d) specialised terms and social organisation (marriage and kinship ties). Moreover, humanitarian organisations may also think triangulating means of verification for proving the distribution of relief items to the TG people by taking pictures or preparing short video clips besides obtaining thumb and signature on the package receipt register. The humanitarian organisation can lose reputation while engaging with the TG people without preparations, sensitisation of team, and most importantly understanding gender and community-specific norms of the TG community.

3. HELP Foundation and Government discovered that COVID-19 humanitarian crisis is mainly urban in nature. It slowed down the cash economy and impacted on the crowded places. The focus of the HELP Foundation, however, remained on the rural areas in past humanitarian flood responses. For the first time, the organisation worked in urban neighbourhoods. HELP Foundation team struggled in finding ways to organise the beneficiaries around social structures like distribution and COVID-19 surveillance committees, etc. The organisation used its previous understanding of social mobilisation, but soon it discovered that the rural model would not work in town.

The staff and volunteers were on a steep learning curve while dealing with the “urban beneficiaries.” There are many lessons learnt in organising urban people (e.g., the community organisation may be inappropriate; lane-level interest group may work better, etc.) during the relief operations. The team should further reflect and come up with a social mobilisation strategy for humanitarian work in urban areas of South Punjab. The availability of guidance notes with some training will significantly build the capacity of the HELP Foundation to undertake relief operations in future confidently.

HELP Foundation used Google Forms to identify and register beneficiary for the Start Network funded Project (please also see Page No. 1 and 7). It learnt that Google Forms work only when the internet connection is available. The forms did not work offline. As a result, staff also obtained information using paper Questionnaire in the areas where the internet connection was unstable. It resulted in a workload for the team. HELP Foundation learnt the need for finding some other cheap digital solution that could also work offline. Moreover, the HELP Foundation will inform Google about the use of forms during COVID-19 emergency and will request them to introduce free offline capability in the Forms.

While undertaking the assessment, the HELP Foundation used ranking criteria for the selection of beneficiaries. In some neighbourhoods, many households were qualifying the requirements and were eligible for the food and hygiene packs. However, the organisation had a limited number of food and hygiene packs. The staff undertook wealth and well-being ranking with the community participation to select the poorest households. HELP Foundation shared the names of homes chosen with the community and asked people to raise concern either in public or private with the organisation if someone believed that his/her family was lowest than

the listed ones. It did not receive a single complaint about the selection of an inappropriate beneficiary.

#### **4.1.9 Distribution of food and hygiene packs in COVID-19 pandemic**

HELP Foundation obtained SOPs of the Punjab Government from the DA. The organisation held sessions to sensitise staff and volunteers about the mandatory requirements. Moreover, the whole team planned the design of a distribution point. For example, what was the location suitable for distribution, how to avoid crowds and how to maintain social distance among the beneficiaries? HELP Foundation had helped the DA in distributing food packs (please see Page No. 7) before the Start Network funded Project and the experience was extremely helpful in designing a distribution plan for the Project.

The team distributed tokens to the selected beneficiaries in advance. The ticket contained information about the date, time and venue of the distribution. Moreover, the HELP Team also requested the beneficiaries to bring help or arrange transport for carrying the relief items. The average distance of a distribution point from the beneficiaries' home was about one kilometre. The explicit information about distribution points helped the beneficiaries to come prepared at the distribution point, and the majority of them did not hang around once they received the relief items.

HELP Foundation had earlier learnt that even the use of force cannot make people maintain social distance in Pakistan's society. It is a social norm and habit of people to be physically close to each other. Hugging and handshaking have high social value. It takes efforts for people to remain at a distance from other people. Therefore, the HELP Foundation had to think some positive way to enforce social distancing at the distribution point. The team decided to put a maximum of 50 chairs at a social distance at the distribution point. It also placed the food and hygiene packages with each chair before the arrival of beneficiaries. The team reduced the reasons for beneficiaries to move, stand or come closer to each other or with the staff of the HELP Foundation. The entry and exit points were on the opposite sides of the distribution venue; making it possible for the team to process beneficiaries in an orderly manner.

Once seated, the team explained contents of each pack and gave each beneficiary list of items in the bag. The organisation printed the details in Urdu. The staff asked the beneficiaries to check their packages. Some bags contained damaged items, but all the packs had the listed items in scheduled quantities. The vendor and his representatives were present at every distribution point, which immediately replaced the damaged items. The staff of HELP Foundation also used the opportunity to highlight facts about COVID-19 and the importance of maintaining social distance, wearing a face mask and frequently washing hands with the soap.

After receiving the items, the beneficiaries gave feedback to HELP Foundation about the distribution processes. Though HELP Foundation used chairs to restrain movement of beneficiaries; the beneficiaries saw the arrangement as "honouring" them. In Pakistan's local context, offering a chair to someone is a sign of high respect. By putting the chairs and placing

packages with each chair immediately take away the natural anxiety of a place of distribution. The provision of placing chairs for beneficiaries to sit though had extra financial cost, but the arrangement had a calming impact on the whole atmosphere at the distribution point.

HELP Foundation distributed relief items in the early morning hours. The timing helped to avoid the attention of the onlookers. HELP Foundation did not invite Police or other law enforcement agencies at the distribution points. The organisation believes that NGOs should not ask Police or security agencies to come at distribution points because their presence reduces the civil space and display of guns and batons are unhelpful in creating a tolerant, plural and peaceful atmosphere. The beneficiaries and staff identified the ingredients of a successful distribution which are (1) local presence of the organisation, (2) goodwill in the area and (3) sound social mobilisation processes (e.g., explaining the selection criteria and announcing names of selected beneficiaries, etc.).

At the Project formulation phase, HELP Foundation did not think through the distribution process and did not budget for the chairs and other special arrangements (like restricted entries, etc.). The beneficiaries, especially the PWDs and older women, shared that they had to hire transport and paid an average of PKR 200 (1 GBP) for taking food items home from the distribution point. In the planning process, the HELP Foundation did not make provision budgetary provision for food transportation from distribution points to the homes. PWDs and older women required such provision because most of them took a loan from the neighbours to pay for vehicle. The lesson learnt is to break every planned activity into tasks after approval of the Project and allocate resources for each task from the Project Budget. There is a need to improve Project planning further and costing processes at the organisational level.

The distribution procedures of the HELP Foundation required the physical presence of a beneficiary at the distribution point. PWD came to the distribution points along with their family help. It was challenging for them to visit the distribution points, especially for their family members who had to arrange transportation. However, it was the first visit outside the home for PWDs since the lockout of COVID-19. Some PWDs were also crying with joy when they saw their names written on the beneficiary list and affixed thumbs. They shared that they felt important and honoured by being at the distribution point. One disabled woman was delighted and was clapping throughout her stay at the distribution point. Majority of the PWDs were happy to be outside home and happy to meet with other people. However, their relatives and family members were irritated and requested that in future relief items of PWDs should be given to them at home. HELP Foundation learnt both the views and is in the process of consulting with Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to devise the best way forward. In general, the team of HELP Foundation discovered a need for technical training or orientation about working with disabled persons.

The use of a mobile phone in the distribution of cash and in-kind support is increasing in Pakistan. The Government is contacting beneficiaries through mobile messages. Therefore, even the destitute households have a mobile connection. The control over a mobile phone is mainly with men of the family; though women are often the beneficiaries of various Government schemes. HELP Foundation also asked for the mobile number from every

selected beneficiary. However, the majority of the mobile numbers against women's names are with their husbands, sons or other male members of the family. Use of mobile phone and other IT services is not yet prevalent among the poorest of the poor women of District Rajanpur. HELP Foundation's team ensured that when they talk over the mobile, they asked the men to connect them with the women beneficiaries. HELP Foundation did it deliberately to make it sure that the whole family has a good understanding that relief items were coming to their family only due to woman beneficiary. At the Project Review phase, we cannot make a sound judgement if such action contributed to empowering women? However, it was evident that women gained respect and importance within the family after receiving the food and hygiene packs.

In Pakistan, it is complicated to travel or undertake any task that involves banks or other institutions without citizenship number and biomatrix verification. While registering beneficiaries, HELP Foundation identified 56 persons (mostly older women) who did not possess citizenship number. HELP Foundation connected them with the local office of the National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA), and their verification and registration were under processes at the time of Project Review. NADRA issues citizenship number at birth; therefore, every person irrespective of age can have the registration. HELP Foundation only focused on beneficiaries and did not connect families with NADRA for the registration of children under 18 years of age. It is a lesson learnt for the HELP Foundation, and in future, the organisation will ensure citizenship registration of every family member, especially children and older women.

***Some of the best practices that HELP Foundation may continue in future are the following:***

1. Reflecting on the earlier experiences and using the critical points of learning in subsequent distribution,
2. Restraining movement of the beneficiaries through placing chairs and relief packs before the arrival of the beneficiaries,
3. Providing information about COVID-19 and what to do to avoid its spread,
4. Distributing at early hours to avoid the summer heat and crowds of onlookers,
5. Informing beneficiaries to come prepared for carrying the relief items back home,
6. Avoiding the presence of Police or other law enforcement agencies, promoting civil space without guns or batons,
7. Addressing complaints of the people at the spot by replacing the damaged items,
8. Accessible distribution points for all the people.

HELP Foundation did not consider it essential to display the boards or panaflexes for complaint registration process and display the phone number and other details for submitting complaints in each village and just at the distribution points only with a separatey desk for this purpose. The team thought that they engaged with the community at various steps and such system is required where NGO is working for the first time and will leave the areas after completion of the Project.

#### **4.1.10 Contagious COVID-19 and rumours**

The Government of Pakistan established a mechanism for information dissemination around COVID-19, preventative measures and general guidelines for the people. Though the mainstream media followed the instructions, social media which has more outreach was full of fake news and rumours around the spread of COVID-19. HELP Foundation was in unfamiliar territory when it came to awareness raising about COVID-19, preventative steps that women, children, men, TG and disabled could undertake to remain safe from the disease. The fake news provided supplementary “plausible” explanation for the people. HELP Foundation confronted with a wide range of fake news and rumours which were in some instances more contagious than COVID-19 itself.

In mass media campaigns, the Government used the words “fight,” “defeat,” “enemy” and other masculine allegories; whereas HELP Foundation staff focused on the element of hope, perseverance and sharing knowledge and resources in their conversations with the people. During the initial assessment and beneficiary registration process, people asked the team about COVID-19. Though the people were receiving information from mainstream and social media, the element of trust was, however, missing and people wanted to reconfirm the news from trusted organisations like the HELP Foundation. The organisation did not primarily focus on countering fake news and rumours as such; though whenever a phoney story popped up during the conversation, the team refuted it with the correct information.

The spread of fake news and stories remained a constant concern. The lesson learnt for future humanitarian work is also to devise a strategy to manage the spread of fake news and rumours while focusing on positive messaging. HELP Foundation lacked the skills in countering fake news as it confronted them at the massive level for the first time in the humanitarian situation. Therefore, it needs some capacity building around the management of fake news and rumours.

#### **4.1.11 COVID-19 awareness campaign**

The Provincial Health Ministry approved a list of messages for the COVID-19 awareness campaign. HELP Foundation adopted the statements according to the local context. However, the HELP Foundation avoided the masculine language in its message formulation. HELP Foundation distributed messages through social media. It also decided not to send messages on mobile phones to avoid duplication because mobile operators were already sending awareness messages in English and Urdu. The local cable operators are popular in District

Rajanpur. HELP Foundation sent video clips to the cable operators for the dissemination of messages. The fake news and rumours were also rampant during Project implementation (please also see Page No. 21 for more details). HELP Foundation was too engaged in making arrangements for the distribution of relief items. Therefore, it did not evaluate the impact of the messages by obtaining feedback.

It is a crucial lesson learned that the awareness campaign should not entirely focus on the supply side; instead, organisations should also make efforts to understand the demand side of the information and offer tailor-made communication products.

HELP Foundation already had hygiene awareness materials made. The pictures and sketches were in the local (urban and rural) context. The organisation modified them in the light of Government's guidelines. The best practice is to use the materials which are approved by the authorities, especially when the nature of the disaster is too scientific like COVID-19 pandemic.

HELP Foundation had the experience of dealing with the printers. HELP Foundation hired a designer who composed the materials at the office of the HELP Foundation. HELP Foundation printed the documents with a colour printer, pre-tested the materials and provided feedback for further improvement. The composer finalised the documents. HELP Foundation sent the final soft files to the printing company for printing. It is a good practice to engage designer-cum-composer separately from the printing company, but it also means more work for the HELP Foundation to manage two contracts. The team believes that it is essential for quality controls that designers and printers are different firms.

The printers often delay the printing job in Pakistan's context, and it is an important lesson learnt for the HELP Foundation from its flood response humanitarian work. The organisation explicitly mentioned the deadlines for the production of materials and also built-in penalties in the contract to effectively manage printing orders. It is a best practice to include clauses in related to the delays and poor-quality work; though often recovery of full penalty is not possible.

HELP Foundation adopted three critical strategies for the dissemination and distribution of awareness materials. In the first strategy, it enlisted all the public space, including mosques and shrines. It was the Holy month of Muharram when Shia Muslims were congregating. HELP Foundation deployed its volunteers outside the religious places and distributed awareness-raising pamphlets. Moreover, on every Friday, the organisation distributed materials at the religious congregations in the town. In the second strategy, the HELP Foundation put panflex banners at the Government Offices, particularly the ones dealing with the public. In the third strategy, the HELP Foundation provided charts and other awareness materials in the schools, especially the ones which were functioning.

The best practices are (1) usage of approved messages and (2) printing of Punjab Government name and logo on the communication materials. The logo opened up an opportunity for HELP Foundation to distribute the materials at all places, including the Government offices and private institutions. Tehsil Municipality takes tax for the banners and

other public advertisements. Due to the Government logo and use of approved wording, the local Municipality did not send tax notices to the organisation.

#### **4.1.12 Instituting monitoring framework**

The management shared the Project Proposal with the team and volunteers. The Proposal had a listing of significant activities, and the budget was comprehensive and self-explanatory. The best practice is to Plan well at the project formulation phase because it provides the basis for subsequent actions, including the formulation of the monitoring framework.

HELP Foundation converted all the activities in output indicators through team meetings, and team members took responsibility for various output indicators. The responsible person for a particular output indicator also planned the support that he/she needed from another team member or volunteer. At the team level, staff and volunteers regularly and explicitly shared mutual expectations.

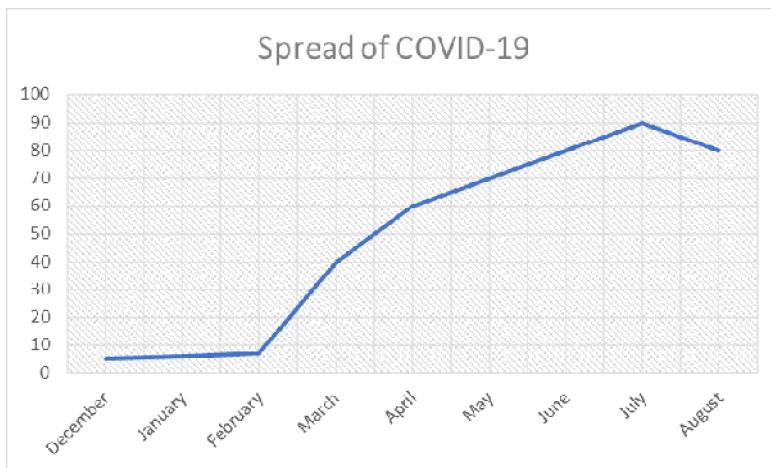
The team decided to meet daily to update each other about the progress against the output indicators. The quick daily meeting was extremely helpful in developing shared understanding, handling hurdles and challenges and planning the work of the next day. The critical pressing factor was the short duration of the Project and at one level, the time constraint also helped the team in cutting the noise and focusing on output indicators where the organisation was lagging.

Through its monitoring and daily frequency of reviews, HELP Foundation discovered that the quality of social mobilisation in urban areas was weak (please see Page No. 17for details). However, the HELP Foundation was unable to take corrective measures due to the short time frame of the Project. HELP Foundation also discovered through its regular monitoring that it would have been highly costly for the organisation to implement similar Project on tight deadlines in the Districts where it had no prior presence.

### **4.2 Relevance with the local needs and effectiveness (Objective No. 2)**

#### **4.2.1 Onset of pandemic and humanitarian response strategy**

According to the beneficiaries, Government officials and staff of the HELP Foundation, COVID-



19 evolved slowly during the months of January and February. For people and the District Government, it was a distinct disease spreading in China, Europe, America, Iran and other countries. The first realisation about the pandemic transpired in the District in later March and early April when Health officials quarantined a large number of pilgrims returning from Iraq and Iran after the annual pilgrimage. The spread escalated from March onward.

The directive for general lockdown came to the District Government from the Provincial Government. After lockdown, the DA called a meeting of departments and organisations who have been traditionally dealing with humanitarian emergencies. Before COVID-19, the District Government had established "NGO Coordination Cell" to (1) coordinate work of NGOs and INGOs, (2) process & issue NOCs and (3) facilitate NGOs and INGOs in their interaction with the intelligence and law enforcement agencies. However, only one INGO (Qatar Charity) and one NGO (HELP Foundation) came forward and occasionally participated in the coordination mechanisms<sup>4</sup>. The DA contacted the local philanthropists and requested their support in the distribution of food items. One local philanthropist donated 1,000 packs of food to the DA which Administration distributed through the Social Welfare Department from Rajanpur city. The food commodities in each food pack were worth of approximately PKR 1,000 (5 GBP). At a later stage, a local industrialist donated 500 food packs (please see Page No. 9), and the DA distributed them with the assistance of the HELP Foundation. Please see Page No. 7 for more details about the role of the HELP Foundation in the distribution.

The health authorities, civil society organisations and DA had never dealt with such a challenging humanitarian situation. The most challenging part was the "invisible nature" of the emergency. There was a general atmosphere of fear. The informants told that the people were

<sup>4</sup>The Government of Pakistan has consistently followed a policy to restrict funding and activities of INGOs and NGOs in the country since 2015. As a result, INGOs and NGOs lost the civil space, funding and capacity. At the time of COVID-19 emergency, a few NGOs in the district had some external funding for the development work and they could not immediately change the funded activities. Most of NGOs, including HELP Foundation, had no donor funded project for the last two years and had lost capable paid staff. However, some NGOs were able to operate with the local resources but the level of their operations was insignificant compared to the humanitarian needs during COVID-19 peak months. For general understanding about Pakistan's civil space, you may read Mohmand, Shandana Khan (2020), "[Pakistan's Closing Civil Space](#)."

fearful about the “unknown” and “uncertain” aspects of the COVID-19. Everyone was learning how to respond to the situation?

#### 4.2.2 Health crisis to the financial crunch

Once the initial fear of massive death toll from COVID-29 subsided, the DA and other decision-makers discovered that the lockdown had completely clogged economic cycle in rural and urban areas of the District. From April onward, the nature of humanitarian crises gradually shifted from health emergency to financial crisis.

Before the COVID-19, the District Rajanpur was among the five poorest Districts of Punjab Province. The District lagged considerably in terms of social development, exhibiting too high levels of poverty and deprivation. On Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), District Rajanpur has the highest score besides having the lowest poverty headcount and intensity in the Punjab Province.

MPI of Punjab Province: Top Five Poor Districts<sup>5</sup>

District Poverty Ranking	District	MPI	Incidence (H)	Intensity (A)
1	Rajanpur	0.357	64.40%	55.40%
2	Dera Ghazi Khan	0.351	63.70%	55.10%
3	Muzaffargarh	0.338	64.80%	52.10%
4	Rahim Yar Khan	0.289	56.80%	50.80%
5	Bahawalpur	0.273	53.00%	51.50%

The economic impact of COVID-19 was visible in District Rajanpur at the time of Project Review. The people working in the informal sector could not find work for months, and they were in dire need of external support. It was a situation where every household felt the negative economic impact. The case was worst for low-income families. Initially, they took loan for buying food, but they could not engage in gainful activity and could not pay back. In the stressful period, poor people quickly depleted their savings, including social capital. Incongruously the food was available in the local market, but the people lacked the cash to buy.

The people living in towns were in the complicated, problematic situation compared to the rural areas of District Rajanpur because they had to pay cash for every need. Since living standards were already at the bottom in the rural Rajanpur, the people living in the villages were not in pressing need to pay for the electricity bills, school fees or rentals.

#### 4.2.3 Government relief response

<sup>5</sup><https://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/MPI/MPI%204pager.pdf>

During COVID-19 crisis, the Revenue Department was busy in the assessment of agriculture losses due to attack of locust swarms. COVID-19 was an unprecedented humanitarian crisis; the DA did not undertake a formal evaluation through the Revenue Department, the assessment line agency at the District level.

The District Government did not allocate cash or other resources for food and hygiene needs of the GP. The Social Welfare Department was receiving applications from poor people. It was distributing mainly the food or other items that it had received from the generous local people and responsible businesses as a charity.

The Federal Government started Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme (EECP) in April. It took time to move money from the exchequer to low-income families, and it was too late, too little. Many deserving families fell between the complex web of rules and could not ever get registration or appeal against decisions of EECP.

#### **4.2.4 Direct Project beneficiaries**

The Government and local philanthropists distributed cash and in-kind support. They left glaring gaps. There were plenty of poor and destitute families who fell through the cracks. HELP Foundation identified such families and included them as direct beneficiaries. Compared to the needs and a large number of impoverished families, HELP Foundation could only reach 400 families. The chosen 400 families were approximately 1% of the total poorest and needy living in the District<sup>6</sup>.

A poor PWD and DWW, who were the beneficiaries of Project, reported that EECP rejected their applications on the ground of oversea visits. Both the women could not appeal against the decision because no one was available at the District level to listen to their side of the story. It is a popular tradition in the District to financially support the pilgrimage of poor people. PWD went to Iraq and Iran one year ago for the pilgrimage on behalf of a father of a rich man who could not travel due to the poor health. A wealthy local family sent DWW two years ago to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage on behalf of their deceased parents. The PWD and DWW are genuinely destitute, and everyone in the community knew their conditions. However, no organisation could help them in getting EECP enrollment. HELP Foundation identified and included them in the Project.

HELP Foundation was the only organisation that included TG persons as a category of beneficiaries and distributed raw food and hygiene items. The philanthropists and local people ignored them for the food and other support; though TG persons were able to get cooked food from the Shrine of Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Farid (May Allah bless Khawaja Sahib and his family).

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<sup>6</sup>The ultra-poor households are 40,000 in the District Rajanpur.

#### **4.2.5 Predicament of food and non-food humanitarian assistance**

Though cash distribution appeared as the best way to respond in the humanitarian crisis of COVID-19; HELP Foundation advocated and decided to distribute food. The informants told that majority of the poor people had already taken food items on loans from the local shops. In urban areas, the top priority of the male head of the household was to pay the electricity bill to avoid disconnection. Therefore, in the context of most marginalised people, distribution of food was a highly relevant and appropriate intervention. There was a high probability that the cash would have gone to settle the existing loans or to pay the electricity bills.

The control over food items largely remained with the women at the household level. The women informants told that they were the happiest persons in their families upon receiving food packs. Some women shared that they also gifted food items (primarily sugar, cooking oil and tea) to their poor neighbours who could not qualify for obtaining food pack because HELP Foundation had limited funds and selected the most impoverished families. The beneficiaries shared that they liked all the items in the food pack. For women, the three top food commodities were sugar, tea, and wheat flour. The least essential things were *Daliya* (wheat porridge) and salt. For children, the most attractive items were biscuits and sugar. The children reported that the biscuits were broken inside packets (see Page No. 14 for more details about issues with the packaging of food items) and even then, they ate them eagerly. The men informants told that they saw food packs as "saving on the compulsory expenditures." They highlighted that cooking oil, wheat flour, rice and sugar were the most valuable (pricy) items in the bag.

Some beneficiaries from the urban area reported that they also shared the food items with their neighbours or other families also. They shared that the savings due to the provision of this packages was utilized for the purpose to pay for the electricity bill because they could not afford to pay hefty reconnection fees and penalties. Food items increased control and access of women over food at the family level and contributed to enhancing their influence within the family and neighbourhood.

#### **4.2.6 Awareness-raising and creating enabling circumstances**

The group discussions and key informant interviews revealed that the people did not generally trust the Government's provided information. They believed more on rumours and fake news. The people commonly believed the bogus preventive remedies like eating chillies, onions or garlic to cure the disease. The awareness-raising sessions of HELP Foundation provided them with the opportunity to ask questions and verify the authenticity of various news and rumours. Please also see Page No. 21.

Majority of the beneficiaries knew before attending awareness-raising sessions of the HELP Foundation that washing hands with soap was an effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, they did not frequently wash their hands or wash them with soap. The beneficiaries attributed it to their habit of "not washing" hands on an average day. However,

when men beneficiaries saw handwashing points in the markets and bazaars, they recalled the awareness messages and washed their hands with soap at the stand. All the beneficiaries that we met knew the importance of washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. They attributed their awareness to the hygiene sessions of HELP Foundation, but it is highly likely that they also received information from multiple sources. The women beneficiaries could recall some discussions with HELP Foundation's team regarding menstrual hygiene, provision and use of sanitary pads in the kit.

The Government and media were advising people for frequent handwashing and wearing face masks. However, no organisation or Government department distributed soap or protective facemasks except HELP Foundation. The distribution of Hygiene packs responded to the under-funded critical needs around creating enabling capacity among the people actually to wash their hands with soap.

The availability of soap and facemasks enabled beneficiaries and their families to use the soap and wear the masks. The use of soap was high compared to the use of face masks. The beneficiaries reported that they still had face masks because they used them selectively. There is a high probability that the majority of the beneficiaries did not use the face masks; they highly appreciated the donation. Please also see Section 4.2.8 on Page No. 28 about value-for-money.

#### **4.2.7 Proportionate humanitarian response**

COVID-19 pandemic gradually decreased in District Rajanpur, and by the end of the Project, Government lifted the general lockdown, markets reopened, and life is slowly returning to normal. COVID-19 did not spread rampantly in the District as was feared. However, we cannot attribute slow spread and decrease of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Project's interventions mainly because of the small scale of the intervention compared to needs and scale of the humanitarian crisis albeit interventions were highly relevant in the local context. The humanitarian response of the HELP Foundation was not proportionate to the scale of COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4.2.8 Value-for-money**

Start Network allocated a relatively small amount of PKR 6,517,449.00 (Aprrox GBP 30,000) to the HELP Foundation. The organisation spent funds judiciously. Out of the total amount, HELP Foundation spent 90% on the Direct Project Costs. Moreover, the organisation spent 75.36% on Project Materials and Services. The food items cost was approximately PKR 64.29 (GBP 0.31) per person per day. The hygiene materials cost was PKR 22.70 (GBP 0.11) per person per day. The beneficiaries reported that the food and hygiene packs helped them to save money on household spending. It was, however, difficult to calculate how much an average beneficiary family saved on expenses because of the assistance? There were items in the hygiene kits and food packs that beneficiaries would never spend money in the context of COVID-19 economic situation. For example, a majority of the beneficiaries (men, women and

transgender) in the group discussions and also in individual interviews shared that they would not buy sanitary pads, face masks and Daliya with their own money, especially when they had other priorities like paying for electricity bills or rentals. The purchase of handwashing soaps was also at the lowest priority for them. Therefore, the Project not only raised awareness about mensurational health and the importance of handwashing and using facemasks; but also provided the items to create enabling environment. Please also see Section 4.2.6 on Page No. 27 for more details.

The reached 28,328 direct beneficiaries with relief items. The Project cost per beneficiary was PKR 205.38 (GBP 0.97) for 30 days or PKR 6.85 (GBP 0.03) per day. Compared to the outreach, the cost beneficiary is significantly low if an International organisation would have implemented the Project.

***The following factors helped the organisation in keeping the operational costs down and improving the overall efficiency:***

1. HELP Foundation already had an office and local presence. Therefore, office set-up costs did not apply.
2. The organisation had technical capacity and knowledge. The management, staff, volunteers and board members were able to avoid false starts. It knew the rules and regulations and had prepared the required documents and were able to complete the tasks on time.
3. The organisation had access to the area and local communities. It knew the most cost-effective routes and means of transportation, storage and other operational issues.
4. The organisation had a working relationship with the Government and was able to secure NOCs on time (please see Point No. 2). Moreover, the organisation had goodwill with the local vendors. It was able to obtain quality food and other items on a competitive price.
5. The staff travel was at a minimum because the staff was mainly from the District (except for a Manager). HELP Foundation did not spend funds on the staff accommodation and food.
6. The remuneration and other benefits of the staff were significantly low compared to the international organisations for comparable positions, competencies and required skills<sup>7</sup>.

In the case of an International organisation implementing the Project, it had to pay a premium price above the expenses on rental, procurement of goods and services, staff remunerations and other associated costs.

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<sup>7</sup>The International Organisations did not take interest in the District and did not open their operational offices which they had done during mega emergencies in the past. Due to absence of International Organisations, HELP Foundation was able to retain its quality staff for the implementation of the Project. Please also see Page No. 7 for more details.

## **4.3 Humanitarian initiatives and longterm Programme (Objective No. 3)**

HELP Foundation was cognizant about the implications of its 45 days humanitarian Project for its long term development and campaigning work in the District. During the implementation of the Start Network funded Project, the organisation built on the existing experience and further expanded scope of its social mobilisation to the urban areas besides working with new categories of beneficiaries such as DWWs and TG communities.

### **4.3.1 Organisational approach**

The overall mission of the HELP Foundation is to overcome poverty and suffering in South Punjab. The organisation works for alleviating poverty through long term development work. In contrast, the word “suffering” represents the strategic interest of the organisation in disasters. District Rajanpur is the poorest district and prone to flash floods, hill torrents, locust swarm attacks and occasionally spillover of terrorist activities. HELP Foundation had never worked in pandemics, and it was the first experience of responding to the humanitarian crisis of an epidemic.

The organisation does not see hazards and their impact as isolated phenomena. The management, staff and volunteers of HELP Foundation consider organisational humanitarian responses as long term engagement with the people and communities. Therefore, it selected the geographic areas for its development and humanitarian work which are vulnerable to hazards such as flash floods and hill torrents. The engagement of the organisation with the local communities is all around the year. The longevity of partnering enabled HELP Foundation to take on a holistic approach while responding to the humanitarian emergency. Traditionally it has worked with the hazard-prone communities in preventive, mitigating and responding to the impact of hazards. The work of the organisation includes the following:

1. The social mobilisation around existing hazards and poverty as a whole (vulnerability),
2. Community-based risk awareness and assessments, including hazard analysis and vulnerability and capacity analysis,
3. Preparation of community-based development plans. The plans also contain community-based and low-cost actions around hazards and their impact.
4. Engagement with the locally organized groups of women, children and men around agriculture, education, training, research and information sharing,
5. The organisation is linking community organisations and their plans with the District Floods Management Plans and overall development planning processes at the Local Government level. It also includes engagement with the Government on institutional frameworks, policy, legislation and community actions,

6. Application of measures including environmental management, agriculture practice modifications, land use and community shelters, protection of WASH facilities, partnership and networking,
7. The organisation makes early warning systems functional, including forecasting, dissemination of warnings, preparedness measures, and reaction capacities.

As per its approach, the HELP Foundation responds to the humanitarian crisis, but its engagement does not end with the completion of relief work. Instead, it continues commitment with the affected communities and further built on the relationships with the community groups that it created during the relief phase. HELP Foundation always assumes a community-based while responding to humanitarian emergencies.

Time and speed are the quintessence of the humanitarian response, and organising people require time and resources. HELP Foundation is well aware of the tension between social mobilisation and timeliness of humanitarian response. Over the years, the organisation has developed the institutional understanding and have devised minimum steps for various contexts to efficiently organise local people depending on the level of urgency and scale of the disaster. The organisation's institutional knowledge is, however, primarily for the rural areas.

As per its standard practice, HELP Foundation maintains a partnering relationship at least for ten years with the rural communities where it has worked during humanitarian relief. HELP Foundation is dependent on (1) the donor funds and (2) permission from the Government. Therefore, the partnering relationship is mainly about cooperation and collaboration instead of only focusing on "money" and NOCs. The organisation built a relationship with the Social Welfare Department over the years, and the organisation keeps the department informed about its community work. The organisational relationship of HELP Foundation with the (1) Social Welfare Department and (2) Community-based Organisations is anchored in mutual interests like reducing the impact of floods, reducing poverty and connecting with the local philanthropists for charity and other welfare work.

As per standard procedures, the organisation organises communities and then develop their linkages with the Government and other institutions besides arranging low-cost awareness-raising activities, skills development and preparation of multi-year community development plans<sup>8</sup>. The organisation believes that money is not the primary enabling factor in partnering relationships with the local communities. When disaster hits an area where HELP Foundation did not work before, the HELP Foundation usually starts community assessments through its volunteers of community-based groups from the regions where it has existing partnerships. The involvement of community volunteers at the assessment phase helps the organisation to establish trust and working relationship with other similar communities. HELP Foundation also provides information about damages and different needs of the disaster-affected communities

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<sup>8</sup>The Community Development Plans not only include the development priorities but also commitments of the local community around flood preparedness, early warning and evacuation. The plans facilitate direct engagement of the local communities in the development planning processes of the local Governments.

to the Government and routinely assist the Government on technical issues ranging from identification of the beneficiaries to relief distribution, monitoring, etc.

Before the planning and implementation of the Start Network funded Project, HELP Foundation undertook the above described essential steps as per its humanitarian response trajectory. The significant learning for HELP Foundation is its discovery about the incompatibility of its rural mobilisation strategy in the Municipal areas (towns or urban neighbourhoods) and working with the “different” households of TG persons. From the discussions with the staff, beneficiaries, volunteers and Government officials, we came to know that HELP Foundation conceptualised humanitarian assistance during COVID-19 response from a broader perspective. It made efforts to integrate prevention, preparedness and disaster risk reduction into the “Humanitarian Response Programme” of the organisation. The organisation considers Start Network funded Project as one part of a complicated puzzle. At the time of Project review, HELP Foundation was making efforts to raise resources for linking its relief work to the economic recovery of the most vulnerable beneficiaries.

#### **4.3.2 Working with the district government and others**

During every disaster, including COVID-19, there is an invisible tension between the DA and intelligence agencies when it comes to “deal” with NGOs and INGOs in the District. The DA is often supportive and welcoming to the local NGOs and INGOs, especially from friendly countries like Turkey and Qatar. The intelligence agencies are, on the other hand, focused on national security and viewed the work of civil societies from a security perspective. The tension is constructive, and it leads to the creation of “flexibility” for the NGOs and INGOs. HELP Foundation strictly followed the instructions of the DA, provided all the required information about funding (especially foreign funding) to intelligence agencies and maintained the trust over the years. As a result, the organisation can operate in humanitarian situations and work with the Government. However, functional space is fragile and unpredictable.

HELP Foundation had to provide extensive information to the intelligence agencies about the board members, senior managers, staff, volunteers and the areas of work. Intelligence agencies asked information about the family, siblings and other relatives besides asking for citizenship numbers, bank accounts, passport numbers and further private details. HELP Foundation provided the details and agencies are still in the process of vetting HELP Foundation for issuing a possible three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Project provided prospect for the restarting of the security clearance process, which earlier stalled for years due to the non-availability of funding. The process will take at least one year to complete. There is a high likelihood that the HELP Foundation will get MOU by the end of the vetting processes.

During the Project implementation, HELP Foundation made use of the humanitarian space for completion of the Project. It would have never been able to complete the project in a given

budget and deadline if it had not built a prior relationship with the Government and others or INGOs were operational in the District<sup>9</sup>.

HELP Foundation has an excellent working relationship with the DA; however, it has little influence with EAD at the Federal level. EAD regulates the flow of foreign assistance. The Start Network helped the organisation to obtain NOC from EAD well on time. Please see Page No. 11 for more details. However, with the completion of the Project, EAD permission to work has also ended. HELP Foundation is looking forward to a long-term engagement with the Start Network or other organisations to retain the institutional ability for receiving international assistance.

#### **4.3.3 Continuity of the Project's benefits**

HELP Foundation was already responding to the COVID-19 humanitarian crisis in its traditional manner. It had started registration of beneficiaries, awareness-raising, distribution of facemask, installation of handwashing points, coordination with the Government. The organisation even assisted the Government in the distribution of relief items (please see Page No. 7 for more details). The funding from the Start Network helped the organisation to respond to under-funded needs, fill the gaps, assist vulnerable groups and prevent further spread of COVID-19.

Though DA issued request to NGOs and INGOs to help, they could not come up with assistance. In the context of “no assistance,” the financial aid from the Start Network was critical in the local context though it was small funding. Therefore, from the HELP Foundation’s perspective, the Project funding was timely, relevant, and it enabled the organisation to scale up its work. The Project funding was not an isolated or standalone opportunity for the HELP Foundation; instead, it fully aligned with the organisational approach and strategic focus (please see Section No. 4.3.1 on Page No. 30 for more details).

The primary activities included food and hygiene packs distribution. The provision of free food was too small to make a negative impact on the food supply chain in the District or distort market prices. Moreover, the quantities of food items in the pack were “just enough” for 30 days for a family of six persons. The organisation distributed food in a context where a large number of beneficiaries qualified for receiving the assistance but HELP Foundation could not select the majority of them and had to prioritise low-income family primarily because of the limited number of food packs (financial resources). It is highly unlikely that the availability of food for 30 days for a few families will result in discouraging the farmers from producing their food.

The markets and other economic activities have gradually been opening up in the District. The project beneficiaries also started their work in the informal sector. The recent wave of inflation

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<sup>9</sup>When INGOs open offices and become operational in the District Rajanpur, the cost of staff, humanitarian supplies and rentals significantly go up. The absence of INGOs opening offices for COVID-19 response keep the prices stable and HELP Foundation was able to complete the Project in 45 days within the budgeted amount.

in August-September taken away the ability of the poor people to buy food because their wages remained the same or in some case decreased. Therefore, the beneficiaries who received food assistance are still highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and other hazards. We expect an increased migration of youngmen in the coming months to the urban centres like Multan, Karachi and Lahore<sup>10</sup>.

HELP Foundation discovered that it lacked the experience of mobilisation people in the urban context. Therefore, the Project provided an opportunity for the organisation to make initial connections with the people at the neighbourhood level. HELP Foundation has plans to continue partnering relationship with the urban beneficiaries and formulate social mobilisation strategy for its humanitarian and development work in the urban context. The organisation has not yet decided "how it would continue partnering relationship with the TG community?" However, it had firm plans to work with TG persons in future.

HELP Foundation kept doing awareness-raising and hygiene promotion even after the end of the Project. The Government also ran frequent public messages on radio, mobile phone and social media. The hygiene promotional work started by the HELP Foundation during the Project is still intact. However, the HELP Foundation now lacks the resources to distribute facemask, sanitizer or soap with the hygiene messages.

COVID-19 has not yet ended though the Project has finished. Therefore, at the time of Project Review, the organisation was making a plan to start and explore options of starting economic recovery Programme.

## **4.4 Measuring the extent of Project's achievements (Objective No. 4)**

### **4.4.1 Project budget vs spent**

The Project had a duration of 45 days, and it ended on 11 September 2020. The total budget of the project was GBP 29,980.32. Start Network transferred the money through banking channels. HELP Foundation received the funds in PKR, and the total amount received was PKR 6,517,449.00. The exchange rate at the time of transfer was PKR 217.39 to 1 GBP. HELP Foundation spent the funds in PKR, and by the end of the Project, it had exchange gain of PKR 156,129.00. Apart from exchange gain, the HELP Foundation spent all the funds by the budgeted provisions. At the time of Project Review, the following was the summary of budget vs actual spent:

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<sup>10</sup>The youngmen temporarily go to urban areas in search of work. In absence of work opportunities, they often resort to begging. Therefore, one can see increase in bidders at traffic signals, bazaars and other places. The bidders are, in fact, people from rural towns and districts who have been dislodged due to unavailability or lack of gainful employment in their native places.

### Project Budget VS Spent

Sr. #	Budget Head	Budgeted (PKR)	Spent (PKR)	Spent (GBP)	% Budget VS Spent
1	Project Materials for Beneficiaries	4,721,100	4,782,300	22,733	102
2	Human Resources	364,500	364,500	1,733	100
3	Services of Beneficiaries	250,500	208,862	993	84
4	Utilities	67,500	53,038	252	79
5	Coordination & Networking	30,000	29,260	139	98
6	Post Distribution Monitoring	300,000	350,000	1,664	117
7	Management Cost	573,360	573,360	2,725	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6,306,960</b>	<b>6,361,320</b>	<b>30,239</b>	

Total Over spent is covered from the money exchange gains.

## 4.4.2 Project targets

The Project successfully achieved all its planned targets within the stipulated time and budget. The details are the following:

**Project Targets: Planned VS Achieved**

Ref.	Activity	Unit	Planned (Unit)	Actual (Unit)	Difference (If Any)
0.0	On-boarding the project team	Person	5	5	-
1.1	Identify people for food packs & hygiene kits	Families	400	400	-
1.2	Train project team and community volunteers to work in COVID-19's context	Persons trained	20	22	2
1.3	Provide PPEs to project team and community volunteers	PPEs provided	20	10	- 10
1.4	Procure and verify quality of food packs	Packages	400	400	-
1.5	Distribute food packs	Packages	400	400	-
1.6	Coordinate and meetings with GLAs, local NGOs and relevant stakeholders	Meetings	2	2	-
1.7	Post distribution & implementation monitoring research (third party)	Research paper	1	1	-
2.1	Design, print and install awareness messages through Panaflex on Rickshaw	Panaflex	500	500	-
2.2	Design, print and install awareness messages on billboards	Billboards	3	3	-
2.3	Design, print and distribute broachers	broachers	2,500	2,500	-
2.4	Design, print and distribute posters	Posters	1,000	3,000	2,000
2.5	Disseminate awareness messages and short clips through social media	Messages	2,500	8,260	5,760
2.6	Install and handover (to the Government) handwashing facilities	Facilities	5	5	-
3.1	Procure and verify quality of hygiene kits	Kits	400	400	-
3.2	Distribute hygiene kits	Kits	400	400	-
3.3	Promote hygiene through face-to-face sessions	Families	400	400	-
3.4	Establish linkages of vulnerable people with Government Departments	Departments	4	4	-
3.5	Provide application forms for various Welfare schemes of the Government	Forms	2	6	4
3.6	Assist vulnerable people to connect to NADRA for ID cards	Persons trained	100	103	3
3.7	Highlight the issues of vulnerable people	Stories	3	1	- 2

#### 4.4.3 Distribution of food packs

The details of food items in each food pack (planned vs actual) are the following:

**Details of a Food Pack (Planned VS Actual)**

Sr. No.	Food Item (in alphabetic order)	Unit	Planned (Unit)	Actual (Unit)	Difference (If any)
1	Chili Powder (200 GM)	Gram	1.0	1.0	-
2	Cooking Oil	Litres	5.0	5.0	-
3	Daal Chana	Kilogram	3.0	3.0	-
4	High Energy Biscuit (100 GM per packet)	Packets	12.0	12.0	-
5	Iodize Salt (800 GM)	Grams	1.0	1.0	-
6	Moong Daal	Kilogram	3.0	3.0	-
7	Packing with visibility	Piece	1.0	1.0	-
8	Rice	Kilogram	5.0	5.0	-
9	Sugar	Kilogram	5.0	5.0	-
10	Tea (190 GM)	Grams	2.0	2.0	-
11	Wheat Bulgur (daliya) (500 GM)	Grams	2.0	2.0	-
12	Wheat Flour	Kilogram	20.0	40.0	20.0

#### 4.4.4 Distribution of hygiene pack

The details of food items in each hygiene pack (planned vs actual) are the following:

**Details of a Hygiene Pack (Planned VS Actual)**

Sr. No.	Hygiene Item (in alphabetic order)	Unit	Planned (Unit)	Actual (Unit)	Difference (If any)
1	Comb (Plain + Anti lice)	Piece	2.0	2.0	-
2	Detergent soap for washing.	Bar	4.0	4.0	-
3	Kit Bag with visibility	Bag	1.0	1.0	-
4	Lota	Piece	1.0	1.0	-
5	Nail Cutter	Piece	1.0	1.0	-
6	Preventive facemask	Number	28.0	28.0	-
8	Sanitary Cloth (for female)	Piece	9.0	9.0	-
9	Soap Container for handwashing soap	Piece	1.0	1.0	-
10	Soap for handwashing	Bar	15.0	15.0	-
11	Towel	Piece	2.0	2.0	-
12	Underwear (Panty)	Piece	8.0	8.0	-

#### 4.4.5 Project beneficiaries

The details of the beneficiaries are the following:

##### **Project Beneficiaries (Planned VS Actual)**

Sr. No.	Project Materials and Services	Target	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Transgender People	Total Persons	Approximate Families	Remarks
1	Food Packs	Planned	700	532	826	700	42	2,800	400	The beneficiaries of Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3 are the same persons.
		Actual	530	619	643	562	36	2,390	400	
2	Hygiene Kits		700	532	826	700	42	2,800	400	The beneficiaries of Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3 are the same persons.
		Actual	530	619	643	562	36	2,390	400	
3	Face-to-face hygiene promotion and		700	532	826	700	42	2,800	400	The beneficiaries of Sr. No. 1, 2 & 3 are the same persons.
		Actual	530	619	643	562	36	2,390	400	
4	COVID-19 Preventive Campaign		2,515	7,042	7,564	8,079	0	25,200	3,600	These beneficiaries will be in addition to Sr. 1, 2 and 3.
		Actual	6,525	8,055	4,102	7,256	-	25,938	3,705	
	Total (blue rows + green row)	Planned	3,215	7,574	8,390	8,779	42	28,000	4,000	Planned Project Beneficiaries
	Total (blue rows + green row)	Actual	7,055	8,674	4,745	7,818	36	28,328	4,105	

##### **Age and gender segregated Project Beneficiaries (Themewise)**

Sr. No.	Project Materials and Services	Women			Men			Total Persons
		Under 18	Between 18-50	Over 50	Under 18	Between 18-50	Over 50	
1	COVID-19 Preventive Campaign	5,752	5,166	1,812	6,729	5,361	1,118	25,938
2	Food and Hygiene Kits	530	476	167	620	494	103	2,390
		<b>6,282</b>	<b>5,642</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>7,349</b>	<b>5,855</b>	<b>1,221</b>	<b>28,328</b>

##### **Age and Gender Segregated Project Beneficiaries (Activity Wise)**

Sr. No.	Project Materials and Services	Women			Men			Total Persons
		Under 18	Between 18-50	Over 50	Under 18	Between 18-50	Over 50	
1	PPEs and Training	-	6	-	7	7	-	<b>20</b>
2	Food and Hygiene Kits	530	476	167	620	494	103	<b>2,390</b>
3	Panaflex	281	249	87	328	258	54	<b>1,257</b>
4	Bill Boards	998	896	314	1,167	929	194	<b>4,498</b>
5	Broachers	832	747	262	973	775	162	<b>3,751</b>
6	Posters	1,005	893	320	1,160	934	188	<b>4,500</b>
7	Social Media Campaign	1,912	1,717	602	2,236	1,782	372	<b>8,621</b>
8	Hand Washing Facilities	730	655	229	854	680	143	<b>3,291</b>
		<b>6,288</b>	<b>5,639</b>	<b>1,981</b>	<b>7,345</b>	<b>5,859</b>	<b>1,216</b>	<b>28,328</b>

#### 4.4.6 Project timeline

The Project timeline is the following:

**Project Timeline (Planned VS Actual)**

Sr. #	Activity	Target	Planned	Weeks						
			Actual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	On-boarding the project team	05 Person	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 1	Identify people for food packs & hygiene kits	2800 Persons/400 Families	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 2	Train project team and community volunteers to work in COVID-19's context	20 Persons trained	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 3	Provide PPEs to project team and community volunteers	20 PPEs provided	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 4	Procure and verify quality of food packs.	400 packs procured and verified	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 5	Distribute food packs	400 Food Packs distributed	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 6	Coordinate and meetings with GLAs, local NGOs and relevant stakeholders	01 Coordination meetings	Planned							
			Actual							
1. 7	Post distribution & implementation monitoring research (third party)	01 Research paper	Planned							
			Actual							
2. 1	Design, print and install awareness messages through Panaflex on Rickshaw	500 Panaflex	Planned							
			Actual							
2. 2	Design, print and install awareness messages on billboards	03 Billboards	Planned							
			Actual							
2. 3	Design, print and distribute broachers	2500 broachers	Planned							
			Actual							
2. 4	Design, print and distribute posters	1000 posters	Planned							
			Actual							
2. 5	Disseminate awareness messages and short clips through social media	2500 messages	Planned							

Sr. #	Activity	Target	Planned	Weeks						
			Actual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. 6	Install and handover (to the Government) handwashing facilities	05 facilities	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 1	Procure and verify quality of hygiene kits.	400 kits procured and verified	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 2	Distribute hygiene kits	400 hygiene kits	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 3	Promote hygiene through face-to-face sessions	With 400 families	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 4	Establish linkages of vulnerable people with Government Departments	At least four departments	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 5	Provide application forms for various Welfare schemes of the Government	At least two forms	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 6	Assist vulnerable people to connect to NADRA for ID cards	At least 100 persons	Planned							
			Actual							
3. 7	Highlight the issues of vulnerable people	At least three media stories	Planned							
			Actual							

## **5.0 Objectives of the Project Review**

***The objectives of the Project Review were the following:***

1. To identify vital lessons, best practices and critical issues for further programme development related to COVID-19 in District Rajanpur or similar situations in other provinces.
2. To assess whether the Project was in line with local needs and priorities as well as the donor funding strategy. Did HELP Foundation adopt humanitarian activities to local conditions and requirements? Did it make efforts to increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness of the Humanitarian Action?
3. To assess if the humanitarian activities of a short-term (45 days) ensured cognisance of longer-term and interconnected problems into account? Did HELP Foundation connect humanitarian work with its development and campaigning work in the local context? What are the plans of the HELP Foundation after completion of the Project?
4. To measure the extent to which Project has achieved its purpose within the stipulated time frame of 45 days.

## **6.0 Primary Stakeholders**

The primary Project's stakeholders were the following:

### **6.1 Older Women and Men (OWM)**

Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 require hospitalisation, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die. The poor older women and men cannot afford or have connections to get intensive care in public sector hospitals. Therefore, the HELP Foundation included senior people as direct beneficiaries.

### **6.2 People with Disabilities (PWD)**

COVID-19 is a new disease and humanitarian crisis. The health community is still learning how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it will increase in Pakistan. Disability alone may not relate to a higher risk of getting COVID-19. However, it is also a fact that women, children and men with disabilities are already ill and suffering from some chronic disease. Adults with disabilities are three times more likely than adults without disabilities to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer than adults without disabilities. Moreover, our society excludes the majority of people with disabilities from economic activities, and they are dependent on "charity" of others. Therefore, they are highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and HELP Foundation included them in the Project as beneficiaries.

## **6.3 Domestic Women Workers (DWW)**

The domestic women workers lost their work at a large scale. They were working in homes providing support in cooking, cleaning, child-rearing and other household chores. Most of the domestic women workers are widows, old-aged women or the sole earners of their families. The people are gradually engaging them after slow-down of COVID-19, but they are highly exposed group. Therefore, the Project included them among the primary beneficiaries. Their economic condition has not yet recovered, and exposure to COVID-19 means that they can seriously fell ill that could further push them and their families to destitution and absolute poverty.

## **6.4 Daily-Wage Labourers (DWL)**

The closure of markets led to unemployment of daily wage labourers. However, the markets are now functional with some restrictions. The markets and other public spaces in District Rajanpur are, however, crowded places. The daily wage labourers working at the crowded markets are at high risk as they do not have capacity and knowledge about preventive steps. The Project supported them with food and other (preventive) non-food items.

## **6.5 Transgender Persons (TG)**

The wider society marginalises TG people in Pakistan. The TG persons live on the fringes of society, and their families often exclude and disown them at an early age<sup>11</sup>. They have a traditional social organisation. Majority of the TG people depends on dancing on happy occasions and gatherings (locally called “functions”). Due to COVID-19, marriage ceremonies are fewer and often without crowds. The TG people have lost their primary source of income. At the moment, most of them have left the city and have gone to major urban centres like Karachi and Lahore. The ones staying back are mainly living on alms and daily food support from their close-net community. However, the fraternity itself is in economic pressure, and it cannot cope with the crisis. We saw a significant reduction in the communal homes as TG left for major cities where they are engaged mainly in begging. TG persons were one of the primary beneficiaries in the Project for food and non-food items besides awareness-raising and hygiene promotion.

## **6.6 District Administration (DA)**

DA controls access to beneficiaries, and operations of the HELP Foundation. The administration is not only the executive bureaucracy but also the technical lead department such as District Health Department, Public Health and Engineering Department and Municipal

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<sup>11</sup>Please see <https://tinyurl.com/y58p2ega> for plight of TG persons during COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee, etc. Therefore, they are, as a whole, a critical stakeholder. In the current research, we included them to obtain their views about project implementation. Moreover, we also receive their perspective on various COVID-19 recovery pathways for poor, vulnerable and excluded people.

## **6.7 General Public (GP)**

The Project enhanced awareness about COVID-19 and promoted COVID-19 specific hygiene messages among the GP. The GP receiving the information is also an essential stakeholder in the Project. We obtained their understanding of the preventive measures, and how did they interpret the awareness messages and printed materials?

## **6.8 Project Staff (PS)**

The staff and volunteers implemented the Project. Since the HELP Foundation is a rights-based organisation, the research explored how did the organisation implement the Project? How did the organisation mainstream gender equality and follow the “do-no-harm” approach? Moreover, how did the teams plan and execute the Project? The perspective and learning of the staff were helpful in the review process, especially to identify lessons learnt, best practices and how to move forward on Programme Development trajectory around COVID-19 after completion of the Start Network’s funded Project?

# **7.0 Research Methodology**

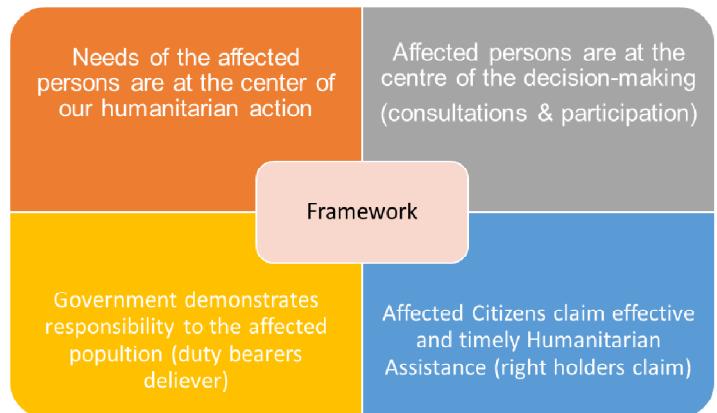
The current study was not a typical post-distribution monitoring research. Moreover, it was also not a standard evaluation of the Project. The nature of the review was primarily exploratory and action-oriented. The organisations undertaking such initiatives are often analysing issues which are evolving, and understanding about them is rudimentary at large. COVID-19 is still unfolding, and there is limited understanding about its bearings, especially on vulnerable, poor and marginalised people and communities. Therefore, the research has implications for policy and practice level pathways, especially in COVID-19's recovery trajectory.

## **7.1 Theoretical Framework**

We used the Rights-based Theoretical Framework for collecting, interpreting and presenting key findings of the review. We used four dimensions of Rights-based Framework as a reference point throughout the review process.

The sources of our Rights-based approach are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Constitution of Pakistan (1973)<sup>12</sup>. In line with the Constitutional Guarantees, Pakistan also has National, Provincial and District Humanitarian Institutions under National Disaster Management Act, 2010<sup>13</sup>. Every citizen has a right to dignified, appropriate and timely assistance in humanitarian crises.

HELP Foundation is following Code-of-Conduct of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). HELP Foundation assisted regardless of the race, creed, or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. HELP Foundation assisted in a manner that is consistent with human rights, including the right to participation, non-discrimination and information<sup>14</sup>. Start Network, the donor of the Project, believes that humanitarian action should be guided by impartiality without discrimination between or within affected populations, and HELP Foundation should focus its attention on the groups or social identities left out from mainstream humanitarian assistance of the Government. Please also see Page No. 5 for four considerations of Start Network for the current financial aid to the Project.



## 7.2 Research Techniques

The consultant used the following research techniques to collect data from Primary and Secondary information sources:

### 7.2.1 Document Review Technique (DRT)

The consultant collected qualitative and quantitative information from the project-related documents such as approved proposal, narrative and financial reports, completion reports, etc. Most of the papers were internal to the HELP Foundation. Besides the internal documents, we also collected records and other related information available in public from primary or secondary stakeholders.

We reviewed and obtained qualitative and quantitative information from the documents to gather background information and determine if the implementation of the plan was in line with

<sup>12</sup> Chapter-I of the Constitution of Pakistan which contains articles about the fundamental rights of citizens. Articles 8 to 28 of the constitution deal with the fundamental rights guaranteed to the citizens of Pakistan and no court, institution or person can revoke them.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ndma.gov.pk/plans/NDMA-Act.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> HELP Foundation also complies with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS).

the agreed costs/results. Moreover, the data collected from the document review helped in refining checklists for Key Informant Interview (KIIss) and Focus Groups Interviews (FGIs). The consultants also obtained financial and narrative information with the use of DRT research technique. The consultant primarily used the information to triangulate information collected through primary information sources.

### **7.2.2Key Informant Interviews (KIIss)**

The consultant used KIIss to gain in-depth qualitative information from the key informants who were primary stakeholders in the evaluation (see Page No. 41 for details of the stakeholders). The consultant collected information from a wide range of stakeholders with varying perspectives. The expertise, knowledge and understanding of the key informants provided insights on the nature of issues, how things worked/did not work, lessons learnt and best practices, etc.

The consultant developed planning steps for completing KIIss. The steps were (1) gathering and reviewing existing data (also see DRT mentioned above), (2) identifying information needs against each research objective, (3) identifying possible vital informants, (4) developing checklists, (5) designing interview tool along with the data processing protocols and finally (6) compiling and organising textual and voice information.

The consultant used the information obtained through KIIss to triangulate information obtained through DRT. The triangulation helped the Project Review to identify critical information gaps that led to further KIIss and Focus Group Interviews (FGIs).

### **7.2.2Focus Group Interviews (FGIs)**

The consultant arranged discussions of a particular category of persons (e.g., direct beneficiaries, etc.) to obtain responses around sensitive issues and generated debate. He used FGIs to understand a problem at a deeper level. FGIs added meaning and understanding to the already received information through DRT and KIIss. The research technique helped in getting at “why” and “how” of various research questions. Moreover, the research technique also identified areas where he needed further information, and he arranged follow-up KIIss. The consultant prepared a checklist for FGIs and conducted the discussions in private, safe and comfortable surroundings for the participants.

**== The End ==**