

Policy Brief

A Strategic Investment Plan for Sustainable Job Creation and Economic Growth in Balochistan's Fisheries Sector

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Executive Summary

Balochistan's fisheries sector accounts for, 30-45% of Pakistan's total marine fish catch. Leads to post-harvest losses estimated at up to 40% due to lack of modern fishing gear, ice plants, and cold storage facilities. It is estimated that 300,000 people are estimated on this industry.¹ Yet weak policy implementation and minimal youth engagement limits its economic potential. This policy brief recommends investing in cold-chain infrastructure, launching targeted skills and entrepreneurship programs for youth, and facilitating direct market access for Balochistan businesses. This plan writes to create jobs, empower youth, and ensure long term sustainability. Transforming Balochistan into an emerging economic province.

Introduction: The Untapped Potential of Baluchistan's Blue Economy

Balochistan's coastline is endowed with rich marine resources that hold significant potential for economic development and poverty alleviation, which contributes between 0.5% to 0.8% Balochistan's provincial GDP². This number might seem small but an important is hyper-concentrated in the coastal districts (Gwadar, Lasbela, Pasni etc.), where it is the primary economic driver and source of livelihood. The industry produces about 150,000 caught fishes by 52,000

¹ Balochistan to Have New Fisheries Policy to Tap Its Potential," *INP Network*, last modified May 28, 2024, <https://www.inp.net.pk/news-detail/economy/balochistan-to-have-new-fisheries-policy-to-tap-its-potential-1>.

² Alluring Balochistan's Fishery and Shrimp Trade," *Pakistan Gulf Economist*, July 8, 2019, <https://www.pakistangulfeconomist.com/2019/07/08/alluring-balochistans-fishery-and-shrimp-trade/>.

fisherman using 7,186 boats³. And most of the catch landed in Balochistan sent to Karachi. Where it entered Pakistan market for the export. Vast majority of value-added processing jobs, export revenues, and business profits are generated outside Balochistan, depriving the local economy of its full potential and contributing to youth unemployment. Where youth a critical source of livelihoods for is operating far below its potential due to outdated infrastructure, inadequate training, and limited opportunities. These challenges prevent it from generating higher revenues and employment. Realizing this potential is critical for the province's economic sustainability.

Unfortunately, the decline of sector directly threatens the livelihood of thousands of existing fishermen and their families. While there are policies exist (e.g., National Fisheries Policy 2006, Balochistan Fisheries Policy 2016)⁴, but have failed due to weak enforcement, insufficient funding, and lack of engagement with youth and entrepreneurs.

Problem statement

1. High Post-Harvest Losses

40% of fish catch waste due to lack of modern fishing gear, ice plants for cold storage to store fish⁵.

2. Value Addition Outside Balochistan

Majority of fish catch is transported to Karachi for processing and export, which is a big issue in the province of jobs and revenue.

3. Outdated Infrastructure

Lack of modern fishing boats, quality of gadgets and old catching techniques.

4. Youth Unemployment & Skill Gaps

Fishermen and youth are unaware of modern business management, international market requirements and use of modern equipment.

³ Balochistan to Have New Fisheries Policy to Tap Its Potential," *INP Network*, last modified May 28, 2024, <https://www.inp.net.pk/news-detail/economy/balochistan-to-have-new-fisheries-policy-to-tap-its-potential-1>.

⁴ National Fisheries Policy Announced," *Dawn*, January 28, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/273999/national-fisheries-policy-announced>.

⁵ Pakistan Business Council, "Harnessing the Fisheries Sector for Growth & Exports," Seafood Policy Brief, August 2022, <https://www.pbc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/Seafood-Policy-Brief.pdf>.

5. Weak Policy Implementation

Policies such as the National Fisheries Policy 2006 and Balochistan Fisheries Policy 2016 have failed due to weak enforcement, insufficient funding, and lack of stakeholder engagement.

6. Limited Market Access

Minimal direct exports from Balochistan; poor connectivity with international markets reduces competitiveness.

7. Threat to Livelihoods

This industry is the livelihood of thousands of life and the Decline of the sector directly affect the income and food security of nearly 300,000 people dependent on fisheries.

Recommendations

First, the fishing industry of balochistan needs to collaborate with youth, universities graduates, and undergraduates as the Punjab provincial government did. The Punjab provincial government launched internships for students in fisheries, aquaculture, and zoology. The program aims to generate 20,000 jobs through shrimp farming expansion⁶. That will create a platform for new ideas and opportunities for youth to contribute in Balochistan's economy.

Second, empowerment of local communities in coastal areas, to manage resources, improve sustainability and production. Creating fisher men training centers in key coastal districts such as (Pasni, Gawadar, and Ormara). Balochistan can learn from Bangladesh, how fish catch monitoring program was introduced in Ashura beel, Goakhola beel and Dikshi beel in 1997 through the Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) project⁷. The project focused on developing

⁶ Government of Punjab, Directorate General of Public Relations, "DGPR Punjab," accessed [Date You Accessed the Site], <https://dgpr.punjab.gov.pk/node/40179?utm>

⁷ WorldFish, "A Digital Platform to Promote Sustainable Aquaculture in Myanmar," WorldFish Digital Archive, accessed [Date You Accessed the Site], <https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/items/d4d2013a-78d0-4d53-97ee-020e903573cb?utm>

community management approaches which would encourage participation of the fisher's beneficiaries and community in sustainable management of the fishery resources.

Third, Establishment of modern processing plants, cold stores, fish markets, and a direct access to the international market which can create opportunities for youth entrepreneurship hubs in Balochistan. An example from Kenya, how Kenya realized that most jobs are not in catching fish but in the post-harvest and market chain⁸. By adopting the similar approach Balochistan can retain greater economic benefits locally and empower coastal youth.

The people in coastal areas are totally dependent on this industry, and there is also need to engage women to come across with men. As Vietnam Bac Lieu province cooperatives, trained women aquaculture and export standards⁹, supported by private companies. Youth and women were given leadership to own their businesses in shrimp farming, turning Vietnam fishers into a major export industry. For Balochistan, the lesson is clear, the province needs a shift to a diversified aquaculture system. By adopting this Balochistan can replicate Vietnam success in making the fisher industry profitable and sustainable.

One of the most immediate step for Balochistan's fisher sector is to make modern cold storage space to store fishes, ice plants and a direct access to the international market. Creating fisher men training centers in key coastal districts, along with partnerships with universities and technical institutes for research and innovation hubs. Develop youth entrepreneurship programs, providing small grants for fish-farms, seafood restaurants, and eco-tourism projects. Also digital skills training, and online marketing. Investing on these options not only reducing waste, but it is the fastest way to create thousands of jobs in packaging, exporting, processing and owning own

⁸ Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), "Impact of Youth Employment Guarantee Schemes on The Kenyan Labour Market," KIPPRA Repository, accessed May 23, 2024, https://repository.kippra.or.ke/handle/123456789/2518?utm_.

⁹ Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, "Inclusive Aquaculture in Vietnam: Cooperatives Take the Lead," *Agroberichten Buitenland*, last modified May 7, 2025, accessed May 23, 2024, https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2025/05/07/inclusive-aquaculture-in-vietnam-cooperatives-take-the-lead?utm_.

businesses. If Balochistan is to transform its fisheries into a genuine engine of growth, this investment cannot be delayed.

To sum up, if this plan were to work, thousands of jobs could be created, which would give confidence and trust to local communities that have been losing trust in the government. It will enhance local productivity and enable Balochistan to get greater value from its marine resources. The fisher sector is not just an economic opportunity, but it's a strategic necessity to ensure sustainable livelihoods, regional stability, and inclusive growth in Balochistan's economy.

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