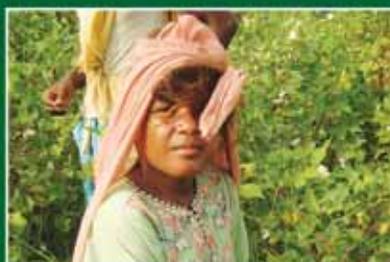


# Child Labor in Cotton Industry

A Rapid Assessment in District Lasbela

*Balochistan, Pakistan*





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Balochistan, Pakistan*

*National Rural Support Programme  
Islamabad, Pakistan*



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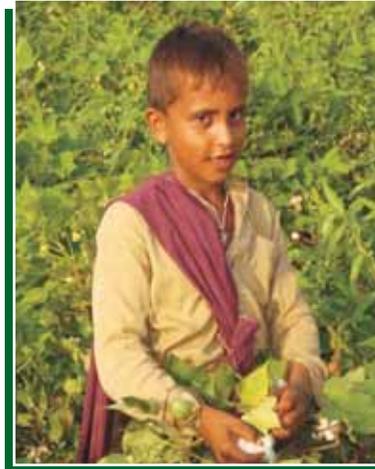
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## Acronyms

BHU	
BT	
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labor Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NRSP	National Rural Support Programme
RA	Rapid Assessment
SHPP	Social & Human Protection Programme
UN	United Nations

## Executive Summary

Children are a fundamental part of the society. They are regarded as a source of hope and inspiration for the future. We see however a vast majority of children in today's world being destitute and deprived of their fundamental rights. The situation is predominantly alarming in many developing and underdeveloped countries including Pakistan, where child labor is at the forefront amongst many societal issues. Child labor remains to be a concern of the day and a painful predicament of our time. It includes activities that are physically, socially, psychologically, ethically harmful to children.



A number of factors contributing to child labor have been identified through various studies conducted all around the globe. Though these studies and investigations have taken place but they are more focused and are limited to a number of regions of Pakistan and in spite of their importance don't give the complete idea of the nature and extend of child labor, work conditions, the factors originating child labor.

National rural support Programme –Social and Human Protection Programme team visited the District Lasbela-Balochistan from September 14 to September 18 for doing the rapid assessment regarding the involvement of children in the cotton seed farming in all Tehsils of the District. The purpose of this Rapid Assessment (RA) was to assess the nature and extent of child labor involved during cotton seed farming in District Lasbela, Balochistan. Also to find out the needs of the children and what protection services/support mechanisms would be best suited for them

The team did semi-structured interviews with the farmers, harries/tenants, children, agriculture department representative, president of the farmers association of District Lasbela, Local schools head masters and Doctors in the basic health units to get an insight into the actual situation regarding the involvement of the children in the cotton seed farming

The cotton farming in the district was started in the year 1994 and owing to its being nascent is besieged by the multiple issues, which include absence of local cotton market; non-availability of the improved/better quality seed; absence of plant expert in the District agriculture department; non-availability of cemented water channels; as only the taped water is available through electricity driven tube wells, and in the presence of frequent unscheduled electricity outages, this source of watering most of times becomes insufficient and unreliable and effect the crop adversely.

The mostly cultivation is done through Harris/tenants, which work on the cotton field on basis of partnership with the farmers. The farmer contributes land and all other expenditures from land preparation to the ripe of the crop and the tenant would do the labor work throughout the cotton season. The 1/4 th of total produce would go to the tenant and 3/4th to the farmer. Tenant along with his family would also do the picking in the picking season and earn the extra income along with the aforesaid 1/4th share @ Rs. (5-12)/ kg cotton. A child can pick on average daily (12-15) Kgs and females (25-30) Kgs daily when they work (8-10) hours.

All children involved in the cotton farming in the one or other way. The tenant children mostly do not go to school and remain involved in the cotton farming from morning till evening with their parents. The children of small farmers mostly go to school but they support their parents in their chores on the field after the school timings. In most of areas either school are absent and if present then are up to 5th standard and not fully functional. Therefore most of the children left the school after the 5th standard and turn full time cotton farms workers.



The main health hazards include the malaria, pneumonia, fever, typhoid, eye infection, wounds on feet and fingers, allergy, faintness out of suffocation, weakness, scabies and insects biting. There are also snakes and scorpion in these cotton fields and the children always remain prone to be their prey. The cases of physical and sexual abuses albeit do exist, but peoples are reluctant to share. The vocal abuses are frequent and even shared by the children during the interviews.

The brief overview of findings of the study show that the primary root cause for child labor points out to poverty particularly in the rural areas. There's unemployment resulting in high level of migration, low level of education standards and infrastructure, insufficient social protection; indifference of society to a problem, family disharmony and diminishing family support; inadequate enforcement of labor laws and trafficking of children within the country. It is of no secret that today use of child labor in many countries including Pakistan is accompanied by breach and abuse of law. We observed that child labor during cotton seed farming is a local trend in District Lasbela, Balochistan.

It is recommended that some interventions like: the awareness campaign among the farmers and Harris regarding the child rights, importance of education, safety measures while doing work on the cotton farms must be planned and implemented. The children of tenants especially aging above 15 must be identified and trained in the vocational and technical skills.

## Background



Agriculture anywhere around the world is considered as one of the major drivers of growth. Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the economic activity of Pakistan, generating about a quarter of the GDP and employs more than two-third of the rural workforce. Agriculture is the backbone of rural economy. In rural Pakistan, land is the principal form of wealth. In Pakistan, every community constituent/citizen in rural area is directly or indirectly related to agriculture. The rural population's dependence on agriculture is well established.

Cotton crop is believed to be one of the lifelines of the national economy as it accounts for 8.2% of the value added in agriculture and about 2% to GDP. In 2006-07 the gross exports were provisionally valued at about US\$ 17.011 billion, of which about 59% were accrued through raw cotton and the textile products made thereof. In the very near future we see a growing yield potential of the existing cotton varieties, growing awareness among farmers regarding scientific crop production and protection measures, new areas available for cotton cultivation and the suitable government policies. When we talk about the pros of cotton seed farming we need to seriously study about the cons as well and find its remedy. Child labor is very much associated, visible and a growing trend in different regions of Pakistan.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock has prepared a long term Cotton Vision for sustained growth in cotton sector and the possible improvement in the quality of raw cotton with following envisaged targets by 2015:

Cotton Production	20.70 Million Bales*
Cotton Yield / hectare	1060 kgs
Mill Consumption of Cotton	20.10 Million Bales*
Exportable Cotton Surplus	0.60 Million Bales*
Improved Yarn Recovery Rate	92% (from current average of 84%)

### Cotton Area, Production and Yield Targets for 2007-08

Province Area	Area (Million Hectares)	Production (Million Bales)	Yield (kgs/ha)
Punjab	2.56	11	731
Sindh	0.64	3	797
KPK	0.005	0.01	340
Balochistan	0.045	0.13	491
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>14.14</b>	<b>740</b>

Source: Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock

## Introduction

Lasbela is a coastal district of Balochistan province of Pakistan. The majority of population speaks either Sindhi or Balochi. Much of the population also speaks a language called Lasi, which is derived from Sindhi or Jadhali. There are five Tehsils in District Lasbela namely Bela, Somiani, Uthal,

Dureji, and Hub. The territory derives its name from the words Las which means a plain surrounded by hill ranges, the greater part of the area is a flat plain. In 1998, the overall population was 98.33% Muslim. Of the remaining, 1.37% are Hindus and 0.14%

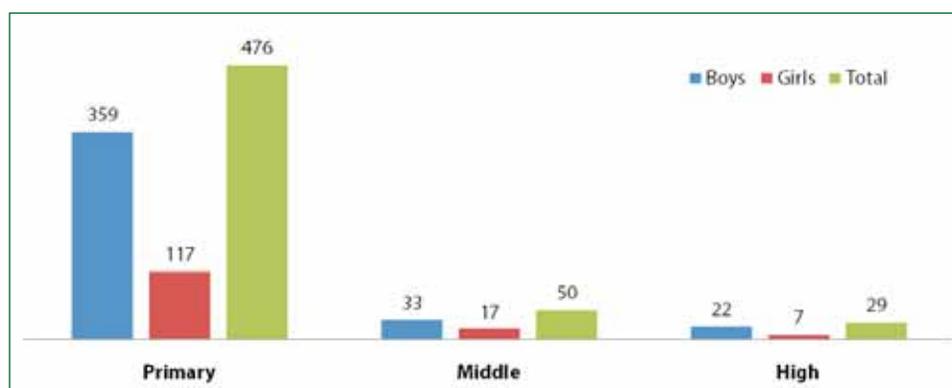
Christian, with the rest belonging to various other religions. In 1998, about 37% of the population resided in the urban areas. In 1998, 22.3% of the population was literate with 32.16% of the males and 10.46% of the females.

DISTRICT PROFILE	
District Name	Lasbela
Area	12574 Km / sq
Land	2494690 Acres
Population	446841
Tehsil's	5
Union Council's	22
Villages	1174



### Schools in District Lasbela

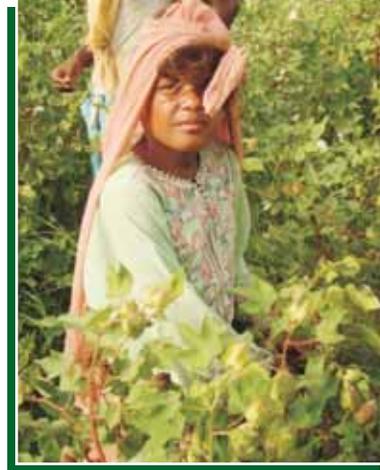
Gender	Primary	Middle	High	Total
Boys	359	33	22	414
Girls	117	17	7	141
Total	476	50	29	555



Source: Education Department, District Lasbela

## Research Methodology

The general objective of the Rapid Assessment (RA) was to collect primary and secondary data on child labor in the cotton industry, to observe and monitor social situations of children and their families to determine if child labor exists in the key locations and if so, to determine the magnitude, characteristics, causes, consequences and finding ways for its elimination of this virus in our society.



## Limitations

Although the Rapid Assessment is a quick and inexpensive method of collecting data, the limited time span, the small sample size used means that findings and results cannot be generalized for the whole country. They can, however, provide an overview of the nature and extent of child labor and identify areas for further research and action. The study did not cover all communities and sectors.

## Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Produce quantitative and particularly qualitative data related to child labor.
- Assess the nature and extent of child labor.
- Characterize the child laborers (by age, sex, schooling, and tribal background).
- Characterize the working and living conditions along with related hazards.
- Identify the socio-economic, cultural and family background of child laborers.
- Examine the root causes of the occupations, including historical trends, cultural mechanisms and social dynamics relating to the problem of child laborers.
- Examine the impact and consequences of cotton seed farming on child laborers.
- Identify perceptions and experiences of child laborers.
- Identify stakeholders
- Assist in improving methods to research, reach and eliminate the problems of child laborers.

## Research Methods

The research involved collection of primary and secondary data. Primary data collection was primarily done through interviews, focus group discussions, observations and consultation with a range of stakeholders. Secondary data includes published and unpublished reports, national statistics, relevant laws and policy documents; were thoroughly examined.

### Observations

These were done in a number of locations across the targeted areas (agricultural lands) of District Lasbela. Consistent with the RA methodology, a simple instrument with guided questions would have sufficed if less detail is required

### Interview with key informants

These were conducted in a number of locations across the targeted areas (agricultural lands) of District Lasbela.

Interviews with well-informed individuals already familiar with the child labor situation in the target area add up to an important part of any Rapid Assessment. A total of 28 interviews and semi structured interviews were conducted with key informants namely;

- a) Children
- b) Parents/tenants/Harris
- c) Farmers/Field supervisors/Landlords
- d) Farmers Association
- e) Agricultural Department
- f) Basic Health Unit
- g) Schools teachers

### Focus group discussions

A total of 24 focus groups were held. 5 of these were with children and young people, 19 were held with groups of adults. These discussions were held in various locations of District Lasbela. The List is attached in the (Annexure A) Consultations were also held with a range of institutions whose work impinged on the study. These included officials in government, non-governmental organizations (Agriculture Department, Farmers Association, Schools, NGO's & BHU's).

## Child Labor Defined, and Child Rights

A child's right not to engage in exploitative labor is set out in a number of conventions, among them the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment, and ILO Convention No. 182 on Immediate Action and Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Child labor, according to International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, is work that harms children's well-being, and hinders their education, development and future livelihood. The ILO has undertaken to eliminate what are termed the worst forms of child labor as defined in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182, which include slavery; pornography and prostitution; the involvement of a child in other illicit activities; and 'work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children'. This last category is generally termed "hazardous child labor", and is particularly applicable to children working in cotton fields.

## Cotton Farming in Brief in Lasbela

The cotton farming in the district was started in the year 1994, and initially it was cultivated in the Tehsil Uthal, but gradually it was expanded to the all other tehsils also. Now it's being cultivated in all five Tehsils, and has turned to be the cash crop of the District. Here follows the detail of crop cultivation in acres tehsil wise in the current season in the following table:

<b>Tehsil Name</b>	<b>Cultivation In acres</b>
Uthal	4708
Hub	12016
Bela	9080
Somiani	12264
Dureji	5465
Total	43533

### Challenges

Out of many challenges being encountered by the cotton farming, the major ones are given below:

- Only the substandard and low-yielding seed is available locally i.e. BT 121, which can maximum yield up to (20-22) Munds/acres, and that would be possible only if the farmer put his best efforts and adopt best practices in the cotton farming.
- No plant expert officer still is available with the District agriculture department, which is depriving the farmers from the useful guidance regarding the better growing of their crops.
- Non-availability of the fertilizers on the subsidized rates by the government
- No cotton market is available for trading in the District, and only few commission agents are available there, which not only provide the seeds, pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers but also purchase the cotton on the price of their own choice.
- As an organized and well structured system of irrigation is non-existent in the whole province generally and in the District in point specifically, and the most of the farmers have tapped the underground water through motor-driven tube wells, which run on the electricity. But owing to the frequent unscheduled outages of the electricity for long hours when the cotton crop to be watered, put the farmers at disadvantageous position and result in the low and poor yielding in the end

- The roads are either unpaved or if paved, then these are often interrupted by the rain-water-driven streams, and in the raining season the transportation across them becomes impossible for the farmers and vice versa.
- Non-availability of the cemented /lined water courses result in the wastage of the taped water
- No ginning factory is available in the whole district, and the only ginning unit established by the govt. at Uthal might start working this year.

## Major stakeholders in Cotton Farming

- Farmer / Landlord
- Tenants and their families
- Commission agent
- Agri input supplier
- Agriculture department
- Ginning /cotton factories

## Working relationship of Farmer and Tenant/ Harri

The farmer with the land holding size below or equal to the 15 acres considered to be the small farmer, and normally he do not forge a partnership with a Harri for cotton cultivation, rather his own family would do the all labor work till the crop is ripe. In most of the cases the Harri has not been employed and bonded by the farmer against an advance payment of some lacks, rather they work as partners. The patch of land and all expenditures incurred from land preparation to the crop cultivation, contributed by the farmer, and all labor work on the field is done by the Tenant/Harri, and the Harri gets  $\frac{1}{4}$  th of the total yield per acre excluding the picking wages. As the  $\frac{1}{4}$  th of cost of the picking wages would come from the Harri and  $\frac{3}{4}$  th would be paid by the farmer. So, the tenant family also does the picking and earn at the rate of Rs. (5-12)/ kg of cotton. Further, an adult female and male on average can picks (25-30) kgs/day and a child below the age of 15 can hardly pick (12-15) kgs/day when they work (7-8) hours daily. On an average one Harri family can manage the labor work on (10-15) acres of land during a season. After the agreement with the farmer is finalized, then the whole family of the tenant set to work on the decided tract of the land, as they do not have any other source of income.

Mostly the Harris/Seeris are locally available, but in case of non-availability, these can be arranged from the other regions of the Balochistan, sindh and southern Punjab. Once a farmer manages to get a Harri from other areas, then most of time he keep attached with the farmer for many seasons. The farmer arranges a temporary shelter for his family at the farm house, and they continue living for many seasons under the unhygienic conditions.

## Stages in the Cotton Farming

### Land preparation

The first and the foremost step in cotton farming is the preparation of land. Mid March to Mid of April is the time when farmers start to prepare their lands for growing cotton. Nowadays, land is often prepared by using tractors and at times cattle but back in the day cattle was used extensively. The purpose of this step is to soften the soil as much as possible and remove whatever gravel and stones are present. The big stones are handpicked by farmers/tenants and their families/landless agriculture workers and their families. Mostly adults are involved in this process.

#### **Health Hazards**

There are not many severe health hazards in this process but at times they may arise. Hazards such as heat stroke and fever are common during land preparation because of continuous labor in scorching heat.

### Seed Sowing

After land preparation, the process of seed sowing takes place. From Mid April to Mid of May, sowing is done. The process involves pushing the cotton seeds down into the soil in a streamlined manner. This process is done by ones bare hands. Mostly children and females are involved in this process.

#### **Health Hazards**

The sowing process involves a great deal of health hazards especially for children as they are more prone to these diseases such as pneumonia, typhoid, malaria, heat stroke and other skin diseases. These diseases are common during the sowing process, because the children have to sow the poison coated seed naked-handedly. Cut on ones foot is also very common as labors cannot see what there stepping on in the muddy water.

### Watering, Spraying, weeding and fertilizing

The third step involves watering, weeding, fertilizing the fields and simultaneously spraying them for any pesticides. The process starts from mid of

May to mid of August. Powerful and heavy electric powered bores are used for watering. Spraying is done using hand pumps, and weeding by locally-made cutting tools. Adults are mostly involved in this process but the children of Harris aging above 12 years, being the fulltime farm worker, also remains fully involved in these chores, exposing themselves to the severe health hazards

#### **Health Hazards**

As no safety measures are taken at this stage, so the worker at this stage also remained exposed to risk of inhaling the poison. So, this indiscriminate exposure to the poison and it may cause the head-ache, vomiting, and other skin diseases. And if it is inhaled in the bigger quantity, then it can be fatal and even causes the death.

### **Picking**

The fourth step involves picking of raw cotton. Picking season starts in the last week of August and goes up to the end of October. Picking is done using bare hands. Young children and females are mostly involved in this process.

#### **Health Hazards**

Picking involves a number of health hazards such as heat stroke, respiratory infections, rashes, faintness out of suffocation and other skin diseases, scorpion, snake and other insects' bites and also various gastro intestinal diseases, cuts and bruises are also common while picking raw cotton.

### **Storage and Transportation**

The fifth stage involves storage of raw cotton and its transportation. The activity runs in parallel to the above step. This process starts from mid September to end of October. Raw cotton is stored in polythene bags (borian) and then placed in a shed. Mostly adults are involved in this exercise.

#### **Health Hazards**

There are not many severe health hazards in this process but at times they may arise. As the transportation is done mostly by carry on head, so the twist in the neck may occur of the due care is not done.

## Cutting

The fifth and the final stage involves cutting of cotton plant. Laborers use its wood for firewood. An axe is mostly used for cutting. This process starts in the end of October. Young adults are mainly involved in this process, but the Harris children have also been seen in supporting their families this process.

### **Health Hazards**

Cutting has the following health hazards

- i. Cuts & bruises
- ii. Heat stroke
- iii. Eye infection
- iv. Snake/ scorpion bites

Children are mostly involved during the picking season followed by sowing, weeding, spraying and cutting etc. As the children remain on the field throughout cotton season, so they suffer from the loss of education and proper growth and deprived from playing and recreation. Along with the aforesaid health hazards, the children and females also continue to be prone to the vocal and sexual abuses. The cases of vocal abuses even also shared by the children during our talk with them, but sexual and physical abuses albeit being existent, peoples feel shy to share and discuss.

## How and why children are involved in the cotton Farming

### How

In case of small farmers, which mostly do cultivation by their own, those children aging above (8-10), who do not go to school work all the day with the parents in almost all stages of the cultivation, but school going children join them after the school is over for the remaining hours of the day, and do not get the time for playing and the home work.

But in case of Harris, their children aging above (8-10), mostly do not go to schools and work all the day with the parents in land preparation, seed sowing, watering and weeding, fertilizing, spraying, picking and finally cutting and disposing the leafless plants. When the cotton is over they get engaged with the wheat crop, and continued remaining on the field round the year.

These working children come on the fields in the early morning with parents and work till 11:00 Am, and keep away from it by 3:00 Pm just to dodge the scorning sun, and then resume their work again and remains in the field till evening. And during this rest time most of them do the herding of goats and other cattle. *“Therefore, in nut shell, on an average, the children aging above (8-10) years are seen working in every cotton field of Tehsil Bella of District Lasbella, either part time after schooling and or full time”.*

### Why

In most of the areas either the school is non-existent, and if exists, then it is up to primary and not fully functional. Therefore, most of the children come out of school after the primary is completed, and start working on the cotton field as full time worker.

**Secondly**, in most of cases parents also compel the children to lend them an helping hand on the cotton field, and they have to accede to it.

**Thirdly**, by working on the cotton field, they start earning at-least a pocket money on daily bases, which continue to keep them attracted to the farm.

**Fourthly**, as to work on the farm is the only source of income available locally especially for Harris, so the parents since early age start keeping their kids engaged with the work so they could support them and also learn the art of cotton cultivation.

**Fifthly**, the parents too are not much conscious about the education of their children, and most of times they do not bother whether his child go to school or not.

*In brief the study shows that the primary root cause for child labor points out to poverty particularly in the rural areas. There's unemployment resulting in high level of migration, low level of education standards and infrastructure, insufficient social protection; indifference of society to a problem, family disharmony and diminishing family support; inadequate enforcement of labor laws and trafficking of children within the country.*

Here follows the words of a boy when he was asked about the reason of working on the cotton field instead of going to school.

*“Why do you work on the cotton farm rather going to school? If I go to school, I will have to wait many years to get an excess to money, but now I have daily?”*

## Recommendations

- The schools around must be put fully functional and educational environment must be made attractive for the students
- Awareness campaign regarding the importance of education among the parents must be launched so as these children could be brought to the schools for education
- Awareness campaigns, regarding the health hazards while working on the cotton fields, must be arranged.
- The children of Harris whose ages are now more than fifteen years must be identified and trained in the vocational and technical skills, in the trades of their own choices, so that the family could be provided with an alternative source of income.
- For those children who have no other option than working on the field must be provided with safety tools like long shoes, cap, gloves, glasses etc. to minimize the health hazards.
- The small farmers, regarding the construction of cemented pipes or plastic pipes water courses can be supported, so as the wastages of the water could be evaded to the possible extent.
- The farmers can also be provided facility of micro-credit on soft terms and conditions
- In some areas even the primary schools are non-existent, so new schools may be established there.
- It has been the common observation throughout our visit that the Harris children found eating the Ghutca, which is much harmful and if this is done regularly for many years, then it can cause the mouth cancer.

# ***Annexes***



## Annexure (A)

S#	Name	Parentage	Category	UC/Address	Tehsil/District	GPS coordinates	
						Latitude N	Longitude E
1	M. Raheem	M. Ramzan	Farmer	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.27135	66.30951
2	Mubarak Ali butt	Muhammad Refique	Crop reporter		Lasbela	25.80384	66.62792
3	Nawaz Ali	Ali Muhammad	Child	kathore	Bela	26.29013	66.26158
4	abdul bashir	Ali Muhammad	child	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.28483	66.27501
5	Muhammad Yousaf	Faqir Muhammad	Head Master	GBMS welpet Gundacha	Bela	26.36214	66.30398
6	Ghulam Rasool	Muhammad Umer	Medical Technician	BHU Welpet Gundacha-kathore	Bela	26.36177	66.30356
7	Ghulam Muhammad	Muhammad Suleman	Head Master	GBMS Barra bagh	Bela	26.29171	66.30633
8	Muhammad Ibrahim	Hashim	Harri/tenant	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.25069	66.28779
9	Ghulam Hussain	Muhammad Umer	Child	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.25066	66.28781
10	abdul rasool	Ghulam ahmad	Harri/tenant	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.28954	66.28329
11	Haji wali Muhammad	Muhammad yaqoob	Farmer	kathore	Bela	26.25629	66.23018
12	rehmat Ullah	Addul Majeed	Harri/tenant	kathore	Bela	26.28482	66.27501
13	Abdul karim	Muhammad Saleh	Harri/tenant	Welpet-Janoobi	Bela	26.14406	66.37816
14	Ghulam sarwar	Haji Muhammad Siddique	President farmers Association District Lasbela		Lasbela	25.80291	66.62591
15	Fida Hussain	Ghulam Hussain	Child	kathore	Bela	26.27753	66.22028
16	Faqir Muhammad	Muhammad Hussain	Farmer	kathore	Bela	26.27264	66.2209
17	Muhammad Ibrahim	Ghulam Muhammad	Harri/tenant	kathore	Bela	26.27267	66.22097
18	Muhammad rafique	Muhammad yaqoob	Medical technician	BHU Therra welpet Shumali	Bela	26.2852	66.30722
19	Abdul shakoor	Abdul hadi	Farmer	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.28432	66.27337
20	Muhammad arif	Muhammad Ismail	Farmer	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.27004	66.30626
21	Muhammad Yousaf	Muhammad Musa	Child	kathore	Bela	26.2775	66.22035
22	Muhammad sadiq	jaan Muhammad	Farmer	Welpet-Janoobi	Bela	26.17463	66.35005
23	Muhammad	Haji essa	Farmer	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.28993	66.2821
24	Khair Muhammad	Shah meer	farmer	Welpet Shumali	Bela	26.24523	66.29279



National Rural Support Programme

**Social & Human Protection Programme**

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