

Livelihood Patterns and Mechanisms in Borderlands: A Case Study of Mand-Pishin Border



Hemina ^a Abdul Rab ^b Amir Jan ^c

Abstract: *This paper, from a sustainable livelihood perspective with a qualitative case study approach explores livelihood conditions of the Mand-Pishin region, where most families rely on cross-border trade while confronting inadequate infrastructure, limited government support, and unavailability of educational and skill development chances. To carry out this study, an in-depth qualitative research approach was used, while using thematic analysis to identify the primary livelihood patterns and investigate the challenges that are reason for bad socio-economic conditions in Mand. The primary data was collected from 17 respondents, residence of Mand belonging from various and multiple professions. The collected data was analyzed through thematic analysis from which main themes emerged from the perspectives of locals of Mand. The study emphasizes the significance of analyzing the socio-economic problems and challenges and proposes ways to have better socio-economic outcomes. This study highlights practical guidance for progress of Mand that improvement in infrastructure, investment in human capital, and accessibility to borders are important for securing diversified livelihoods in the Mand-Pishin border area.*

Keywords: Mand, Mand-Pishin Borderland, Cross-border Trade, Socio-Economic Conditions, Livelihood Pattern

Introduction

Regardless of the importance of borderlands in sustaining livelihoods, the livelihood patterns and survival strategies of the people of the Mand-Pishin border are subject to exploration in academic literature. Communities residing near the borders typically depend on cross-border exchange of goods, formal and informal trade, and small-scale entrepreneurship to run their households. However, changing border policies, border closures for security concerns, and inadequate infrastructure at the border frequently influence livelihood strategies at the Mand borderland. Meanwhile, prior research on Pakistan's borderlands studies has focused on security policies, cross-border trade, and geopolitical concerns, which left a gap regarding the study of livelihood and survival mechanisms of border communities in response to these changing conditions.

This research study highlights the research gap by looking at the livelihood patterns and mechanisms adopted by the local people of the Mand, rather than paying attention mainly to trade or border security. However, this present study inquires into various economic activities, coping strategies, and socio-economic factors that help to shape the livelihood in the Mand-Pishin border. This study seeks to clear the understanding by applying a qualitative case study approach to show how communities residing in border regions sustain their livelihood under the conditions of economic uncertainty and geographical challenges. The findings will contribute to the literature on borderland livelihood studies while providing first-hand data for policymakers to draft more inclusive policies aimed at bringing betterment in the socio-economic well-being of Mand.

Borders are the areas where limits and differences are created, and it is also a place where various things come together. On a regular basis, cultural exchange is taking place in border regions, where movement of

^a MS Scholar, Department of Political Studies, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences, Uthal, Lasbela, Balochistan, Pakistan.

^b Assistant Professor, Department of Political Studies, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences, Uthal, Balochistan, Pakistan.

^c Assistant Professor, Department of Political Studies, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences, Uthal, Balochistan, Pakistan.

people and capital is taking place daily. At the beginning of the 1990s, the study of borders and borderlands gained attention in academia and was used in policy formation. However, borders are international borders and are the regions that are far away from a state's administration, and cross-border mobility and exchange of commodities are important practices done for local livelihoods. Hence, border regions are the central place for providing ways to cross-border trade and movement of people. On the other hand, there are other negative activities like innumerable forms of illicit action, such as smuggling, informal economic activities, and the movement of illicit goods, that take place easily.

Akyüz (2013) says "borders are physical, literal structures of the state, which also structure a range of meanings and belongings associated with a variety of identities. The reality that the border is a dynamic and dialectic reality which is constructed and reconstructed with the relationships between the state (s) and its agents, the people in this region, the state institutions, local elites, national and international organizations". Political geographer David Newman in his book "Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity" 2006, has shed lights on propagating the general study of borders through holding conferences, publications, and seminars (Newman & Newman, 2000). Moreover, the study of borders and borderlands gained precious notice after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the era of globalization, which was marked as a threat for nation-states that they may lose their role as sovereign entities participating in the global economy of a borderless globe.

The scope of borders and borderlands studies has widened compared to current studies. However, the basic attention of borders was based on state security and sovereignty-related issues, but the approach has shifted to a people-centric notion concerning those living in border regions and near borders (Eilenberg & Wadley, 2009). No doubt, borders have always been seen as the practical ground for political, economic, and physical accessories that are not seen in other places, and this approach provides special attention towards the borderland mechanisms, which focus on the common interests of people. Borders give way to such transnational activities that are illicit and illegal through the state lens (Van and Abraham, 2005). The border is the symbolic mark that distinguishes the identity of two nations, cultures, and states and symbolizes the writ of a state, and an independent borderland is termed in relationship with the region that is adjoined with this. Borders create two different economic systems for two sovereign states, and the states having a strong economic system will eventually wield a strong position in terms of commercial activities and cross-border trade.

Among the five official cross-border points between Pakistan and Iran, the Mand-Pishin border is one of the most frequently used border gates in Balochistan. Mand is on the southern side of Balochistan, and the border area connects with the Iranian border region. People from both sides share the same culture, and there are Baloch who live on both sides. However, both sides interact with each other daily, and continual interaction between people brings about new dynamics in social and economic practices in people's lives. Border areas are regulated by the state, and it ensures its sovereign power through the presence of soldiers, patrol points, barbed wire, and mining areas. Furthermore, in border regions, the state ensures its power presence through political and economic relations.

An area-based analysis of livelihood patterns and mechanisms in borderland regions, with reference to the Mand-Pishin border, highlights a complex socio-economic context shaped by political, cultural, and geographical dimensions. Nevertheless, the existing literature offers insufficient understanding of the present livelihood strategies adopted by local populations. Yarbrow-Bejarano (1994) asserts that border regions are not only geopolitical boundaries; they are the regions of mixed people, language, identity, and sense of belonging. Borders or border regions are such places that act as economic activities and cultural sharing; however, governance and security restrictions are among those hurdles that increase the challenges of livelihood and development. Borderlands are the areas strictly controlled by the states. The survival and livelihood notion becomes the main focus to examine how communities in border regions regulate their lives and the opportunities available. History has evidenced that survival in border regions has been shaped

through wars and displacement. A border is where the economy is generated, and surrounding people will flourish (Jan et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Evolution in border studies shows how individuals in border areas foster both tangible and symbolic means of survival, systematize informal economies and cross-border trade, and engage in social gathering and cultural practices. Şenoğuz (2014) clarifies the significance of everyday border behaviors, where legal and illicit means of subsistence frequently coexist in reaction to economic marginalization and state-imposed limitations. Nevertheless, borderlands are repeatedly distinguished through a high level of migration and goods transfer, which is motivated by economic necessities and environmental conditions. Borderlands are salient venues for people's meetings and mobility; trading networks and livelihood are the factors affecting mobility decisions. Apart from that, factors like youth, gender, and outside shocks such as natural disasters and political disorder are influential upon those decisions (Hammond, 2019). Border regions often display distinct socio-economic, political, and environmental attributes. Though these areas are neglected from national development schedules, they still hold dynamic livelihood management. Several factors are major reasons for shaping livelihood patterns in borderlands, including the state's nonexistence, diversity of cultures and ethnicity, passable borders, weak and limited infrastructure, and suitability for wars and conflicts (World Bank, 2023). However, it is quite difficult to understand the borderlands' livelihood patterns and mechanisms for formalizing suitable and effective policies for stability and progress. According to Turner et al. (2022), internal and external factors play a crucial part in designing livelihood decisions and practices. For example, the Hmong region's livelihood pattern was or is influenced by its own culture and customs, local and environmental knowledge, people's identity, and state influence. The lives of people residing in the border region are directly influenced by border activities; however, when the border is open, it shows a good sign for the local people residing in border areas. Singha (2024) says that permeability or openness of the border is one of the important factors that has direct impacts upon the lives of local people.

Result and Discussion

The result and discussion chapter describes the major themes of the study, how people manage their living and confront challenges in the Mand-Pishin borderland. However, the findings collected through in-depth interviews come from the shared experiences, problems, and mechanisms of local people of Mand, expressed in their own words. Using thematic analysis, this study helped to understand the livelihood patterns, challenges, and coping strategies, such as the ways available for earning, how they cope with these hurdles, and what kind of decisions are made when things go wrong around them.

In this study, the sustainable livelihood approach was employed to examine the local context in Mand to look at the various resources used by the people of Mand to sustain a better livelihood. These resources, such as skills, family assistance, money, and fundamental capitals, display how individuals use these resources to enhance their livelihoods. This approach has helped to highlight the major constraints like unavailability of government services, market flaws, unemployment, and harshness of the environment and how the border region people cope with these difficulties. The data collected reveal that a combination of various income sources, depending on social and cross-border networks, is utilized by the families to manage risks.

This chapter of the research study discusses the findings collected from the semi-structured interviews with the local people of Mand belonging to different professions like male and female teachers, farmers, traders, self-business holders, government officials, and students. The findings are compared with other studies on borderland economies. The major themes consist of livelihood sources and income diversification, border restrictions on livelihoods, infrastructure and market limitations, government, NGO support and policy Needs, political marginalization and state neglect, and future development prospects and opportunities. This classification provides an efficacious thematic framework for the findings to be presented and examined.

1st theme: Livelihood Sources and Income Diversification

The data collected from the local people of the Mand highlights a common theme of livelihood sources and income diversification that shows limited income sources for the people of the Mand-Pishin border region. However, this main theme includes sub-themes such as remittance and livestock dependency, cross-border trade dominance, remittance as a financial buffer, and limited governmental employment opportunities. Each response is discussed and analyzed with supporting literature.

Findings from Respondents

Mand is the bordering rural area of Balochistan that connects with Sistan Baluchistan of Iran, showing a socially, economically, and politically backward picture. Hence, the income sources to support the livelihood structure in the Mand-Pishin borderland are traditional earning ways such as cross-border arrangements, business, and dependency on remittances. Comparing the data between respondents, farming, animal husbandry, and different forms of cross-border activities were the most highlighted and dominant sources of income. However, the findings show these sources of income are directly or indirectly supported by external financial support and a small portion of governmental employment. According to one of the local respondents who belongs to the field of business in Mand, he expressed his views:

“In the border area where we live, most families are close to each other due to kinship ties. On both sides, the main sources of income for most families are agriculture, livestock farming, and small-scale trade. In addition, cross-border trade also plays a significant role in the economy. There are also a few families who rely on remittances from relatives working abroad, especially in the Gulf countries, for their economic needs, which have become an important part of the domestic economy of this region. However, I would like to say that there has been some development in agriculture across the border, namely in Pishin, while the number of people working abroad, especially in the Gulf, is higher than the number of people living in Pishin (Personal communication on Zoom call with Participant 1, on September 20, 2025).”

This initial claim identifies involvement in different livelihood systems, in which agriculture, livestock, and informal cross-border commerce are used to evade vulnerability. The findings support Ellis's (2000) argument that people in rural areas survive better when they have various sources of income, when natural resources and market earnings combine. Similar findings were reported by De Haas (2007), who found that foreign remittances save people from economic stress, and it often provides families in border regions with reliable sources of financial support. Furthermore, another respondent shared his point of view; he responded:

“In our area, Mand, there are limited income sources, which are agriculture, cross-border trade, and livestock. The border includes economic activities like movement of food items, diesel, and oil. However, small- and large-scale businesses in Mand heavily depend on cross-border trade (Personal communication on a Zoom call with Participant 2, on September 20, 2025).”

Participant 2 illustrates how livelihoods in the Mand border region work, mentioning that people do not depend on a single source of income. For instance, the result indicates that in Mand, farming is limited to some extent, so people mostly choose border trade and other businesses as a second option. The claim identifies that border region people combine their production with cross-border trade when the markets in the area are weak and limited (DFID, 1999). The findings also support the argument of Omotuyi (2026), who mentioned in their study that in many border regions, fuel smuggling became a main aspect of livelihood where state presence is limited. Similarly, a businessman shared his point of view during an online conversation; in his response, he expressed:

“There are three major income sources in Mand. The first one is daily wage working activity in which many people in Mand are engaged in small business who run small shops. The second source of income in Mand is border trade. People trade cement, iron and diesel from border. The

third source of income is agriculture. People farm on a small scale and cultivate them to sell them. And there is also a partnership system through which they divide the money earned from agricultural products. These three are the major sources of income in Mand through which the basic needs of people in Mand are fulfilled (face to face communication with Participant 3, on September 24, 2025)."

The findings portray an unstable means of living where households choose different small-scale economic activities to deal with financial instability. Likewise, Scoones (1998) asserts that research on rural livelihood highlights that such diversified but insecure income sources are common in rural border regions. Border economic activities often rely on informal flow of important goods (Newman & McCaffrey, 2004). Furthermore, a similar response was given by Participant 17. He responded:

"The first source of earning is the cross-border trade which can be divided further into two elements: the first one is the proper channel where business from both side, Iran and Pakistan engaged in trade through a proper channel, they put customs and other regularity authorities. And the second one is informal trade which is not regulated but supervised by the enforcement agencies. The first one is cross-border trade, each can be divided into two elements: the proper channel and smuggling or diesel trade in the area, and the second one is agriculture, it is the second largest source of income in my area."

The response shows that Mand follows limited but different sources of income where people rely on a combination of earning sources like cross-border commerce, agriculture, remittances, and limited government jobs to cope with socio-economic instability. Similarly, recent research from rural Pakistan also shows that households are increasingly relying on a diverse range of income sources, including on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities, as a key way to deal with changes in the market and environmental risks (Habib et al., 2022). These findings lend support to Heyman & Smart's (1999) argument that the most suitable breakdown, separating formal trade from informal fuel chain, highlights the hybrid border economies. However, remittances increase the revenue of a country that lacks various economic options.

Analysis

Respondents from the Mand have shared their point of view regarding the sources of income and livelihood in Mand; the findings revealed a complicated but highly concentrated living system in the Mand-Pishin border region. Most interviewees' responses showed similarity in emphasizing the importance of farming and doing animal husbandry, as these activities are being practiced historically as part of their daily survival. Mand, being a rural area, has limited ways of earning, so people in Mand earn little from these activities. The findings support the existing literature that in rural areas farming and livestock are adopted as fundamental sources of income; however, agriculture and livestock are not sufficient pillars from which they can earn a better livelihood, and low production and market uncertainty can cause disruption in their livelihood (Ellis, 2000). Nevertheless, people in Mand are serving in the agricultural field; they harvest crops like wheat, tomatoes, and onions, which is done on a minimal level. Respondents specifically pointed out agriculture as a negligible sector, mirroring evidence regarding lacking farming facilities in the border region, like irrigation, market accessibility, and institutional help to facilitate the agriculture sector and build it as a foremost income sector (Hagblade et al., 2010). Hence, people are farming, but it is no longer the main economic activity.

Each respondent indicated cross-border commerce as the foremost earning source in Mand. A participant responded that "almost every household's earnings come from the border", and a similar sentiment was seen by other respondents, declaring border trade as the backbone of the Mand region. This illustration supports borderland literature that when there is a deficiency of formal employment, those living in border regions are compelled to choose illegal ways of border trading to sustain their livelihood. Such studies underline that in locations where government employment, regular markets, and industrial prospects are limited, cross-border economic activities become the ultimate livelihood system rather than a secondary option, influencing the

structure of the community and movement and income strategies (Rashid, 2023). The result explained and separated the formal and informal trading system of Mand, where the Mand-Pishin border is customized by the authority that movement of goods is checked and levied through a proper channel; meanwhile, illegal movements of goods and diesel are taking place through other ways. Furthermore, these activities demonstrate that border economic activities operate under mixed ways, where legal and illegal trading take place side by side. However, the movement of goods functions as a complicated but important economic system for border regions (Ullah et al., 2022).

Remittances play a significant role as one of the components of livelihood diversification. Remittances play a significant role as one of the components of livelihood diversification. The findings from the respondents highlight that most of the households in Mand, approximately 30- 40% of families, depend on foreign remittances, which are received from their loved ones working in Gulf States. However, the data explained that remittances, as an inflow of money, are very important for families to fulfil their fundamental needs and follow a better living in times when border trading activities are restricted. The findings confirm that remittances function as a security shield for the borderland people during border restrictions. Likewise, this inflow of money acts like protection, securing families during financial troubles. A recent study accounts that in several border regions, remittances build up household flexibility by reducing stress and providing an income backup during financial crises (Rahman & Shrestha, 2021). Besides this, a respondent regarded remittances as a secondary source of income, relying on remittances differing in each family based on their familial networks and economic status (Majumder et al., 2025). Moreover, this difference shows that remittances function well as a security boost for some, but everyone does not benefit from them (Shair et al., 2024). Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the Mand–Pishin economy functions as a hybrid livelihood system: agriculture and livestock endure, remittances supplement, a small number access formal employment, but cross-border trade overwhelmingly dominates as the community's primary and most relied-upon economic foundation.

2nd theme: Challenges Related to Border Restriction on Livelihoods

The second main theme that emerged from the interviewees' opinions is the border restrictions, which serve as one of the main aspects that impact the livelihood of the people of Mand. This theme identifies that border restrictions impacted the livelihood pattern in Mand by restricting the movement of goods and people, limiting access to financial-generating ways. Border restrictions have increased socio-economic crisis in Mand, because when cross-border trade is restricted, long-standing social and economic relations get weakened. This main theme consists of sub-themes of reduction in cross-border trade prospects, increased income instability, enhanced risk of informal livelihood activities, limited mobility, and weakened social and economic networks.

Findings from Respondents

The findings indicate that people living in border regions say that all aspects of their lives relate to the border. The border plays an important role in their livelihoods. However, the insights point out that social, cultural, and economic aspects of life are directly or indirectly related to the border. The data demonstrates that their livelihoods are severely disrupted when the border is closed or restricted for any kind of reason. The participant's viewpoint highlighted that inadequate social and economic conditions in the Mand area are the result of the state's absence. The findings show that people in Mand have a high level of dependence on cross-border economic activities, in terms of working to earn. So, the border functions as the economic lifeline to the people of border regions. When the border is shut down in Mand by the authorities because of security dynamics, the findings demonstrate that livelihoods come to a standstill since they have few other ways to earn a living. According to one of the local respondents who is a teacher by profession in Mand, expressing her views during a Zoom call interview, she said:

“There is an economic crisis due to border restrictions, which is the biggest reason. And unemployment has affected the entire area due to lack of employment (Personal communication on zoom call with Participant 8, on September 28, 2025).”

Her comment on border restrictions reflects the study regarding borderlands, which highlights that restrictions on the border affect the rhythm of daily routines of people. The socio-cultural and socio-economic life of the people is significantly affected. Especially, those whose primary source of income depends on cross-border activities are affected by border restrictions and border closures (Rouillé et al., 2024). In such situations, even for the short term, interruption at the border can cause economic and financial crisis since the circulation of goods, preservation of buyer networks, and meeting fundamental expenses for livelihood get paralyzed. Similarly, Chikanda (2024) argues that many border regions are characterized by a mono-dependent economy with fewer other options, facing extreme vulnerability in times of external stress, whether due to security concerns or policy changes by any of the states. The findings of the present study support this argument, as even a temporary pause at the border and a lack of various means of earning threaten the border community's survival because of their dependency on cross-border exchange. A respondent shared his point of view; he expressed:

“Yes, closing Mand-Pishin border and the Abdui border at Panjgur where oil supply is taking place, throwing negative impacts on people's earnings. Due to this a wave of economic crises have arisen. However, people of Mand are not provided free access to Mand due to uncertain situation at border. They are just doing small level trading which is circulating at their local level. Border closer means closing economic activities or earning which is leading towards social disorder. For instance, People steal things to have money to survive in the economic crises. And this economic crisis is increasing mental stress which might lead people towards having illegal means to survive (Personal communication on zoom call with Participant 9, on September 30, 2025).”

The interview findings revealed that the act of closing and restricting the Mand-Pishin border and the Abdui border at Panjgur has detrimentally affected the livelihood of people of Mand. This demonstrates the community's heavy reliance on cross-border economic activities. Economic or financial stress is evident in the case of a lack of diversification of economic means. Mand became inaccessible to other people because of uncertain situations and small levels of trading and business that circulate within the community. The findings outline that border restrictions mean shutting down earnings, which in turn leads to social issues in Mand. Under economic stress, people are choosing illegal ways to cope with economic hardships, and there has been an increase in stealing. The responses show that border restrictions in Mand have a significant impact on disturbing cross-border trade, disrupting earnings, and enhancing social vulnerability (Rouillé et al., 2024). For instance, similarly, border restrictions policies in Nigeria affected the small traders, due to which an economic recession took place, and people used dangerous survival mechanisms to cope with economic hardships (Busari et al., 2024). Furthermore, another respondent, Participant 4, Deputy District Population Welfare Officer, responded:

“Yes, border trade restrictions and economic crisis impacted the earnings of people of Mand, for instance, in 2023 economic crises in Pakistan where inflation was stragglingly high and the people earnings were reduced significantly. They were hardly managing two-time square meals. For instance, when inflation went to 30 to 40 percent, people of Mand along with the trade restrictions could not find anything else to engage in to sustain their livelihoods rather than some domestic work, agriculture, and taking loans from others. But their impacts are different to various extents (Face to face conversation with Participant 4, on September 25, 2025).”

The findings suggest that financial stress and restrictions on borders have decreased revenue in Mand. According to the respondent, during recent cost escalation, commodities increased approximately 30-40 percent, where people hardly bear the expense of two meals a day. For instance, it is stated that economic crises ultimately result in depreciation of the currency. As we know, people of Mand usually depend on border

trade, where in times of currency devaluation, things from Iran get cheap, and they are able to sustain their lives. The findings illustrate that border restrictions have a significant impact on the lives of the people, because most of the people are engaged in border trade. The result identifies that any restriction on border trade can have an adverse impact. As it has been seen today, the border is closed, and people have nothing to do. And they protested to reopen the border trade. According to one of the local respondents who is a politician and businessman in Mand, he said:

“It has been mentioned before that the Mand-Pishin border is open only to a special class. The poor class of Mand illegally brings oil from Iran and similarly food items are also brought, and shops are open in the markets. When the border is closed, the condition of the shopkeepers of Mand becomes worse because the goods of the shops come from Iran which is cheap. If the oil business from Mand is stopped, people bring oil from the Panjgur border due to which they have to face difficulties and suffer losses (Personal communication on WhatsApp with Participant 10, on October 02, 2025).”

Analysis

Border restrictions are the damaging factor that is influencing daily routine in the Mand-Pishin region. Respondents highlighted that the immediate collapse of informal trade, daily income, and fuel-based transportation activities is disturbing the livelihood of people. Their experiences support other borderland research that demonstrates how illicit cross-border commerce is extremely vulnerable to changes in policy and enforcement activities, leading to abrupt and significant revenue loss (Cantens et al., 2015). Respondents collectively portrayed the livelihood of people of Mand as vulnerable. Once the border is closed, there remain very few and insufficient earning alternatives, pushing them into financial crisis. This reliance also coincides with vulnerability and livelihood models, which claim that populations dependent exclusively on single economic channels, especially informal cross-border flows, remain highly vulnerable to external shocks (Ellis, 2000).

The interviewees disclosed the consequences of border restrictions that go beyond economic stress to social and political disorder within the community. However, participant A indicated that psychological pressure, as related to the literature linking economic shocks to social instability, suggests that border closure is risking the social harmony of society (Dercon, 2004). Respondents such as participant 4 and participant 10 highlighted the impacts of border restrictions on market imbalance, which is creating price distortion, rising inflation, and reducing consumers' purchasing capacity (World Bank, 2008). Additionally, participant 1 and participant 9 emphasized official inequality or corruption, saying that border restrictions only exist for ordinary local traders while elite groups and enforcement agencies are exempt from the impacts of border restrictions (Heller, 2021). Hence, all the responses show that border restrictions by the government regarding security concerns create serious problems for the whole community. These restrictions have had negative impacts on society by affecting families' economies, people's interactions and mobility, and community power structures.

Conclusion

This research study emphasized that livelihood patterns in the Mand-Pishin borderland are structured by a mixture of economic subordination, inadequate infrastructure, lacking government support, and limited options for human development. The result disclosed that the border is the ultimate source of economic life, and most families depend on it for earning a livelihood either directly or indirectly. However, border-related activities such as cross-border trade, border transportation, small business, and fuel-related activities are the foundation of the local economy. Despite households attempting to diversify via livestock, agriculture, or remittances, these efforts are insufficient to decrease vulnerability. Livelihoods in the Mand-Pishin area remain vulnerable because people rely on activities that might be disrupted unexpectedly.

These findings show that constant border closures are causing hurdles for people. When cross-border mobility is restricted, the source of income of daily-wage workers is put in danger as they lose their main source of income, and workers working in transportation become jobless. So, these factors disrupt the entire population shortly. The research study deduces that inconsistent border rules and regulations play a huge role in developing and sustaining livelihood insecurity. The community confronts constant wariness, and this problem reduces the capabilities and motivation to plan or invest in more reliable or authentic economic activities.

However, inadequate and poor infrastructure further enhances livelihood challenges. Roads show miserable conditions, the transportation system is weak, and local markets are disrupted because of border closure. The Mand–Pishin border terminal demonstrates a dysfunctional structure, which is one of the main reasons that restricts trade even when the border is not closed. Furthermore, unstable market links and no access to larger markets decrease the profit margin for businessmen. Because of the limited or inadequate tangible facilities, it stops the community from extending its earnings or benefiting from cross-border activities.

Recommendations

The question arises how the socio-economic conditions in Mand-Pishin borderland can be addressed. In this context, participants in the current study introduced several recommendations aimed at overcoming the challenges that are obstacles to obtaining a better livelihood in the Mand. The following recommendations are likewise:

Improve Local Infrastructure

Address the devastating condition of infrastructure, which requires repaired roads, establish functional markets, small processing units to support agriculture and trade, and fully operationalize the Mand-Pishin border market to ensure transparency and accessibility.

Reform Border Management

Create predictable and clear border policies to avoid sudden disruptions in trade. Simplify procedures for small traders and reduce delays through digital documentation, and ensure fair treatment of local traders and reduce corruption.

Strengthening Government Support

Increase the presence of administrative offices, development agencies, and public service institutions in Mand. Ensure that welfare programs such as BISP and youth initiatives reach deserving beneficiaries.

Expand Education and Skill Development

Improve the quality of local schools by hiring trained teachers and upgrading facilities, and establish vocational training centers offering technical skills, IT, tailoring, carpentry, and small-business training. The government should provide skill-building programs for youth and women to support their participation in formal employment.

Promote Livelihood Diversification

Encourage small-scale businesses, home-based industries, livestock improvement, and handicraft production, and provide microfinance and small grants to help families start new income-generating activities. There should be support for improving agricultural productivity through better seeds, irrigation support, and agricultural extension services.

Strengthening Social Protection

Support community-based savings groups to provide financial stability during border closures and create emergency income-support programs for families affected by trade disruptions.

Enhance Cross-Border Cooperation

Promote cooperation between Pakistan and Iran to ensure smoother and safer trade flows and enhance market accessibility for all. There should be improvement in cross-border transport and communication systems.

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