

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

United Nations Development Programme

PROJECT BRIEF



UNDP Merged Areas Governance Project is a technical assistance project supporting the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in implementing an accelerated development strategy in the Merged Areas (MA) with a focus on delivering on the dividends of the merger

The Merged Areas Governance Project

The 25th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan in 2018, merging the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), presented a historic opportunity for transformation of the region, which until then had largely remained outside the purview of the country's legal, social and political framework. Furthermore, the strategic location of ex-FATA, now known as Merged Areas (MA), had left it vulnerable to infiltration by militant groups, which exacerbated the impacts of multi-dimensional poverty in a context of weak governance and service delivery.

The merger formally extended fundamental constitutional rights to over 5 million people, paving the way for the extension of formal democratic, administrative and governance systems. However, while there has been significant progress in extending basic infrastructure and services since 2018, much remains to be done to fully deliver on the dividends of the merger for the people of the MA.

QUICK FACTS

Duration:	2018 - 2022
Counterparts:	Government of KP, Federal Government
Funding partners:	USAID and FCDO
Location:	Peshawar and Merged Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Annual budget:	US\$ 3,970,653 (2022)
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The KP-FATA merger is a historic opportunity to transform the region

The Merged Areas Governance Project (MAGP) is a technical assistance project to transform the lives of the people of MA through integration with KP, the extension of civilian governance institutions, and socio-economic development. The project supports the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GoKP) in implementing an accelerated development strategy in the MA, aiming to create opportunities for transformative development through innovative approaches that effectively respond to the complexity of the context. The project provides capacity support to strengthen local and urban governance systems and implementation of reforms at the local level in addition to policy support related to integration in response to priorities identified by the government, with a focus on data driven and evidence-based decision making.

A path breaking approach rooted in evidence and innovation

MAGP's approach to delivering on the dividends of the merger is grounded on four key principles

- **Support GoKP in accelerating development in the MA:** MAGP provides system-wide, evidence-based and locally contextualized policy design support to GoKP in implementing its merger reforms programme, including through development of unique, robust planning and budgeting mechanisms and planning frameworks.
- **Engender data-driven and locally contextualized design and planning approaches:** At the core of MAGP's technical support lies a strong evidence-based focus, with the aim of reducing the data gap on the MA in order to facilitate creation of relevant and locally contextualized solutions.
- **An ethos of innovation:** MAGP moves away from traditional, often repeated development approaches to introduce novel, high impact initiatives based on experimentation and problem driven iterative design. This includes innovation in programme design and systems, with the aim of institutionalizing early successes with government support.
- **Centering community voices in development planning:** Building on its early insights and responding to citizens' calls for more inclusive development, MAGP seeks to foster improved citizen-state trust by partnering with communities in locally-led development planning and supporting GoKP in enhancing district level service delivery and local governance systems and capacities.



Figure 1: Training held for Local Government councilors from Bajaur and Mohmand, June 2022

What has the project achieved?

MAGP has been at the forefront of technical assistance to the GoKP since 2018 supporting swift, peaceful and effective integration of the MA with KP

- To help GoKP deliver on its commitment of accelerated development in the MA, MAGP supported the development of a 10-year development plan known as the Tribal Decade Strategy (TDS), as well as two phases of the 3-year Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP) which operationalizes the GoKP's vision under the TDS. The AIP-II (2022-2025), which was recently completed in mid-2022 through a rigorous, participatory and evidence-based process, is a PKR 460 billion programme reflecting a 21% increase in the total cost of the portfolio as compared to AIP-I (2019-2022).



Figure 2: Sub-divisional consultations held by GoKP to inform the development of AIP-II, Feb-Mar 2022

- In its early phase, MAGP helped the provincial government implement the reforms required for the integration of the FATA Secretariat into the provincial administration (under the oversight of the provincial cabinet), to help lay the groundwork for smooth integration of key administrative and legal structures and avoid parallel bureaucracies.
- Since its inception MAGP has supported large scale data collection efforts in the MA, using hybrid, mixed methods and remote surveying techniques to fulfill some of the data vacuum in the MA and facilitate evidence-based decision-making in the region. Notably, this has included the AIP-I baseline survey to map development needs across all areas of the government's service delivery, qualitative research on state of electrification in the MA and a survey on citizens' perception of the merger.
- To address disputes related to land ownership - a key source of conflict in the MA - MAGP supported the government in design and implementation of the first-ever land settlement process in the MA, strengthening its government's capacity to undertake further land settlement work.
- MAGP supported the provincial government in development of its 3-year economic recovery plan known as Azm-e-Nau to manage its development priorities and resource allocations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Despite delays in establishment of local governance structures in the MA, MAGP worked closely with the

government in centering local voices in the merger reform process through training and deployment of 130 Local Government Ambassadors (2019-2021) who conducted various civic education campaigns for MA residents and played a frontline role in COVID-19 prevention, reaching close to 150,000 people across the 7 districts.

- Following the conclusion of the first ever Local Government elections in the region (held in two phases in March 2021 and December 2022), MAGP supported GoKP in capacity building and training of 262 local councilors (213 male, 49 female) across 2 districts – many of whom had little to no prior knowledge and/or understanding of basic democratic governance systems.



Figure 3: Training held for Local Government councilors, June 2022

- To help optimize the provincial government's development spending, MAGP assisted GoKP in developing a specialized project planning and monitoring framework, strategically aligned at sectoral levels (known as PAMFRAMES). Throughout 2020-21 MAGP worked in close coordination with 18 line departments to develop 24 sectoral frameworks (representing a total allocation of PKR 153 billion under AIP-I/ADP).
- MAGP pioneered the introduction of unique, high impact, evidence-based pilot projects, known as the Special Emphasis Programmes (SEPs), to transform development outcomes in key areas (including education, health, women's entrepreneurship, skills development and others). A total of 8 SEPs were approved by the provincial Cabinet under AIP-I (and subsequently implemented with technical assistance from MAGP), which grew to 74 additional initiatives across 14 sectors under AIP-II.



Figure 4: Tunnel farming of tomato crops in Bajaur under Special Emphasis Programme

- Building on its progress in piloting innovative, empirical project designs (under the SEPs), MAGP worked closely with the provincial government to institutionalize its data driven development approach by supporting creation of an independent, evidence-based, problem-solving body, known as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Development Solutions Lab (DSL). Housed under the Planning and Development Department (P&D), the DSL has been formally notified by the GoKP and will serve as a dedicated space for collaboration between national and international experts and academia, with a multi-sectoral focus, supporting on-ground data collection and analysis, inter-departmental coordination and development of experimental project designs

What's next?

- Moving forward, MAGP will continue to support GoKP in implementing an accelerated development strategy in the MA, with a focus on consolidating the gains of the merger and institutionalizing its early approaches to deepen its focus on systemic community-driven reforms
- MAGP will continue to provide technical assistance to GoKP in designing and implementing its flagship innovations under AIP-II, including a PKR 5.6 billion rural development programme (known as the Qabail Led Development Programme) and the new SEPs.
- MAGP will work closely with P&D to further the establishment of the Development Solutions Lab through provision of technical experts and design of the programme with the aim of addressing the region's most intractable problems by piloting unique, results oriented and cost-effective public policy solutions
- MAGP will continue to provide critical capacity support at district levels (initiated in 2021), through the offices of the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) across all 7 districts, supporting timely implementation of initiatives under AIP-I and II
- MAGP will seek to strengthen the local governance implementation systems and capacities, working closely with the Local Government department to enhance efficiency of local administrative units, support inclusive capacity development of elected representatives and develop a medium-term strategy to catalyze institutional strengthening of the department at all levels.
- MAGP will also explore engagements with the provincial government and respective district administrations to diagnose key hurdles and explore possible interventions in building robust, responsive border district management and governance systems across border crossings in the MA.

Where we work?

- Merged Areas and Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa