



## The Punjab Population Innovation Fund

It gives me immense pleasure to write these lines describing how the idea of PPIF was formed and how it materialized into reality. With the induction of the newly elected government in 2013, the Punjab growth strategy 2018 was formulated that provided directions for reforms in the extent and nature of the sets of services required to meet the ambitious goals of the Growth strategy. Soon it became increasingly clear that without additional efforts, the response of reducing fertility in Punjab and the targets of the strategy could not be attained. New evidence emerged -an assessment of the Family Planning landscape in Punjab, identified huge gaps in service provision and communications around family planning services in Punjab and elsewhere (Population Council 2016)<sup>1</sup>. It highlighted the untapped potential of the for profit commercial sector and private providers, hitherto left out of family planning service delivery, in providing additional services. Innovations in communications particularly involving men and youth was another area that was identified requiring further investment, in addition to ongoing programs.

The process of setting up the fund entailed several rounds of meetings starting with the Minister of Finance in January 2015, with the Advisor to the CM on Planning, Chairman Planning and Development Department in March 2015 and finally the CM Punjab to whom we presented the idea in October 2015. During these meetings, it was recognized that there was a need to set up a new instrument to direct financial resources to generate innovative ways of 'tackling population issues'. *The idea of setting up an independent and autonomous fund was born to introduce and support such innovations and to move away from 'business as usual'*

### The Fund's evolution and importance - An Idea takes shape

Starting from the first steps of setting up the organogram of the company and followed through with the registration of the company and proposed names for its Governing Board of directors -we assisted the Planning department to give the idea full shape. The Council offered ideas about design and proposals on which types of services should be tested by PPIF, and, evidence from secondary data, where unmet need is highest, and areas that would facilitate testing of initial impact to enable quick scaling up after a year of operations.

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<sup>1</sup> Population Council. (2016). *Landscape Analysis of Family Planning in Pakistan*. Report submitted to Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Population Council. Islamabad.

The PPIF, as its name suggests, offers an opportunity to innovate and find out-of-the-box, more effective approaches for family planning communication and service delivery. The Fund is a route for testing out innovative (including previously untried) models for serving the unmet need of men and women, both never users and past users, as well as users of traditional methods, with a special emphasis on the poor. The direct goal of all interventions will be to increase access to services, especially in the underserved urban and rural areas, through innovative approaches in communication and service delivery.

*Coming as an initiative from the public sector to involve the private sector, the PPIF is a unique opportunity of cross sectoral work and enhanced efforts to augment the current restricted level of services, communications in the population sector and to ensure better outcomes particularly in the uptake of family planning services.*

The PPIF is a market maker with the immediate goal of accelerating a rise in contraceptive prevalence and reduction in unmet need for family planning services to meet FP2020 targets. Its fundamental role is to test the impact of innovations that spark off a significant increase in consumer market for family planning through greater determination and information availability, enhanced provider motivation, and wider provision of quality family planning services in certain selected areas. The learning agenda is an essential part of the PPIF, and once impact and change are established, the secondary goal is to devise ways of achieving universal access to reproductive health services in Punjab. There will must be a phased approach with a province the size of Punjab. At the same time there is a need to demonstrate impact of the PPIF interventions at a level that encourages continuity of funding and support both from the Government and donor sources.

*I wish the PPIF full success and am sure that it will play a pivotal role in improving the lives of the people of Punjab. Zeba Ayesha Sathar, Country Director Population Council, Pakistan.*