



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STPF 2018-2023 TO MOC 'PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN LED INDIGENOUS CRAFTS OF PAKISTAN THROUGH GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS'

Absence of Geographical Indications GIs
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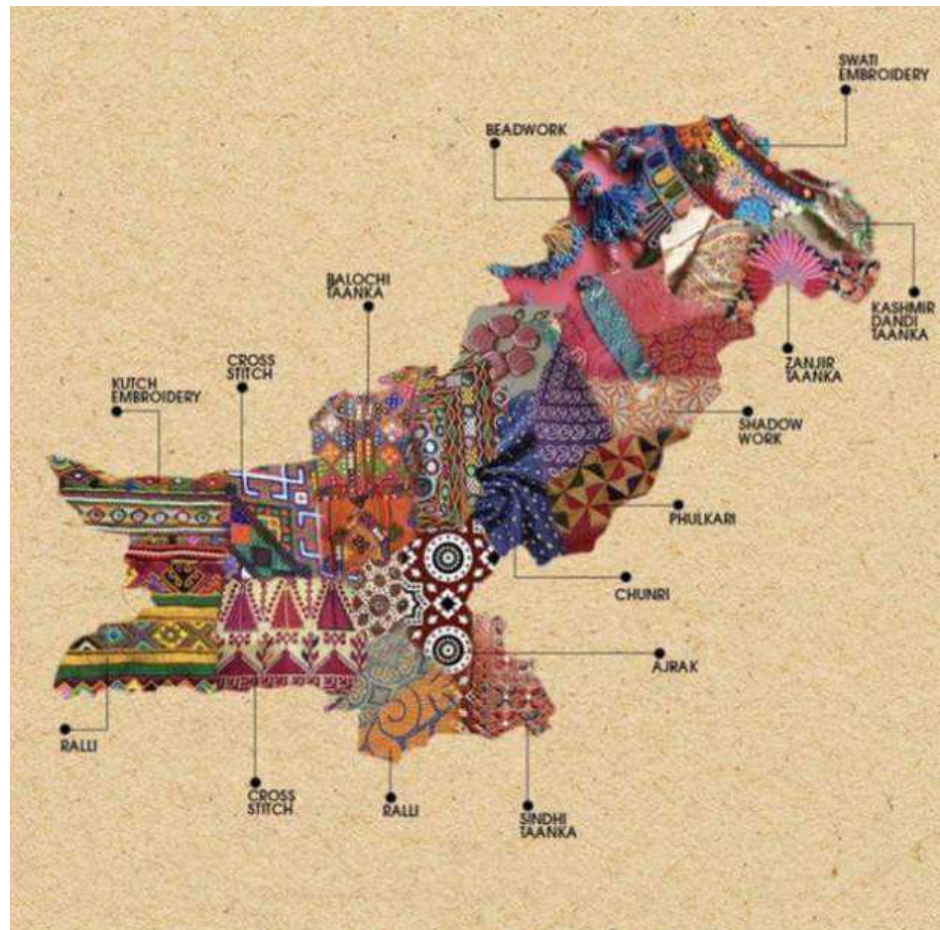
Proposal Outline

Geographical Indication Codes (GIC) for the Indigenous Micro SMEs and Cottage Industry of Pakistan and Ban on the Illegal import and export of the articles by identifying their HS codes to protect the commercial heritage of the country.

OVERVIEW OF THE INDUSTRY

Cottage industry is the backbone of the rural and developing segments of our country. The MSMEs not only provide employment but help in poverty alleviation through economic empowerment from the grass root level.

Hand embroidered apparel, accessories and cultural embellishments are predominately women led crafts that run in the families of the artisans for centuries. The cottage industry of India, Bangladesh and China was able to attract new investors (Bhattacharyya, 2014) so can Pakistan. The web of traditional crafts not only helps in self-employment but through human resource development in the skilled and non-skilled sector the overall economy of the country grows. Pakistan is currently facing an



alarming situation where the country is not only losing its traditional heritage but because of the lack of Government's interest the industry is about to perish. Melinda Gates, 'When money flows into the hands of women, everything changes' and when her source of income depletes because of Government's inaction, the whole socio economic hierarchy dwindles which ultimately puts burden upon the Government.

AREAS OF CONCERN

The Agreement on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights TRIPs is an international legal agreement between all the WTO member nations. Through article 22-24 it needs to give protection to the Geographical Indications to its members. The delay in legislation on part of Pakistan is causing heavily to the country because of the unidentified theft of intellectual property in GIs belonging to Pakistan, causing damage to the economy of Pakistan.

Our Neighboring country India has got 616 Geographical indications with more than 100 on handicrafts.

Recently, ajrak skirts were sold by the International brand H&M, Dolce and Gabbana introduced truck art food processors and Paul Smith launched Peshawari chapal. International Brands like these continue selling Pakistani origin goods due to non-finalization of Geographical Indication Law that aims to protect commercial heritage of country's products.

The articles like Shawls of Swat and Kashmir are facing severe decline in the export and domestic markets because of the import of shawls from China which are machine replicas of our indigenous hand-crafted shawls. If one hand woven and embroidered shawl in Pakistan takes weeks to complete the process, the machine made and embroidered one from China takes hardly one day from scratch to the finished product. These low-cost replicas are destroying our craft domestically and then these are exported in the name of our original Swati and Kashmiri shawls costing us millions of revenue in the exports. With CPEC and trade liberalization there is a severe concern that the mega market's injection of the replicas of handicrafts, into a struggling economy like Pakistan, which are the lifeline of the women artisans of Pakistan can only be fatal.

Our ethnic embroidered dresses are world famous. Hand embroidery stitches and certain techniques like Kashmiri tanka, sindhi tanka, rilli work, mukaish, tarkashi, zardozi, chunri are indigenous to Pakistan.

As had been pointed out by the EX-Prime Minister Shahid Khakkan Abbasi it is about time that Pakistani craftsmen should enjoy the fruits of the internationally famed articles like Ajrak and Peshawari Chapal, which the International designers copy with no repercussions in the absence of the GIs.

Markets are overcrowded by the low quality Indian embroidered dresses which is killing the domestic industry of embroidered apparel. When a woman goes out of business the economic hierarchy of the whole family and ultimately the country deteriorates.

PROPOSALS

STPF Strategic Trade Policy of Pakistan caters to limited sectors. It's time to widen the horizon and emphasize on the exportable products of the cottage industry and Micro SMEs.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS GIS

Protection and Promotion of women intensive products through the mechanism of Geographical indications should not be neglected whenever Pakistan is ready to apply this law in the country. Chinese and Indian copies of our indigenous shawls and apparel should be strictly curbed through media campaigns.

2. THOROUGH RESEARCH STUDY

To identify the indigenous stitches of Pakistan, thorough research should be carried out in the hubs of Pakistani handicrafts to protect and promote them through GIs.

Women Led Micro SMEs with exportable commercial heritage should be identified. Crafts like Bangle industry, Crochet work, Chinioti wooden home decors, apparel with particular stitches like Sindhi tanka, Balouchi Tanka, Shadow work of Multan, Tarkashi, Swat embroidery, Crafts of Hunza, Gilgit, Kalash, and variants of Khusas, Rilli work, crochet work, needs to be immediately protected with Geographical Indications so only the women of Pakistan may take benefit from this exportable Commercial heritage and the economy of Pakistan may become self sustainable.

3. CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL HANDICRAFTS DAY

In the month of February every year, National Handicrafts day should be celebrated throughout the country. The exhibitions with live pavilions, women artisans practically working on their crafts will not only attract international buyers but such a day will bring huge economic opportunities for women too. A day, when all the provinces wearing their traditional attires and embellished with local crafts will emerge, the cultural diversity will bring peace and acceptance in the country of all the provincial cultures.

4. RESEARCH

A thorough research should be carried out to compare the dwindling situations of the exportable Micro SMEs in Pakistan in comparison to its neighboring countries. Successful models should be adopted. A dedicated center by the Government for the promotion of Handicrafts should be formed like our neighboring country India, so it can be treated as a profitable industry.

5. PROCUREMENT

Since women work in small scattered segments, through Procurement, industries should take contracts from International Markets, get the work done from the women. In return they should get incentives from the government in duties, taxes and matching grants to export the products.

6. HS CODES AND THE NEGATIVE LIST

Separate the HS code of the Machine embroidered and hand embroidered apparel and put them in Negative list of imports from India and China and other countries that may impose threat

to the Pakistani handicrafts. Strict action should be taken against the illegal and indirect trade through free ports and smuggling through porous border.

7. HEAVY TAXES TO BE LEVIED TO DISCOURAGE CERTAIN IMPORTS

For China and Korea the imports of the menace of machine embroidered shawl replicas should be identified with HS codes and should be levied with heavy duties on their import.

8. CAPACITY BUILDING

Branding, product sophistication, innovation, value addition and product sophistication for this sector should be specially emphasized. Organizations like NAVTAC and skill development sectors should be re-equipped with modern tools and technology so the sector could be export ready.

9. MARKET ASSESSMENT

Commercial Attaches, Our embassies and Foreign missions should play their part to explore the markets for the exports of our commercial heritage. A serious approach from them will help in market assessment which will open new international markets.

10. INTERNATIONAL MARKET ACCESS

Special visas should be issued to the women who want to explore the foreign markets. The terms and conditions should be softened for the women entrepreneurs. GSP plus status and other trade agreements should offer visas to women on soft terms and conditions. When signing any new trade agreement, this provision should be advocated.

11. INTENSIVE CAMPAIGNING

To promote women led products by the government, domestically and internationally is need of the day. Pakistan seems to be shying away from its traditional crafts. A serious campaign to sensitize the general public on its socio economic significance can play the most needed role for their promotion.

12. ACCESS TO FINANCE

Should be readdressed for this sector. With a new approach that actually caters to the sector.

Being part of USAID-PREIA's Women Leadership in Trade Policy program, Mahwish Afridi had an opportunity to take part in the consultative sessions for the formulation of the new trade policy of Pakistan 2018-2023.