

**HUMAN RIGHTS CASE NO. 71310-G
(REGARDING DEATHS OF 400 INFANTS IN
THARPARKAR)**

***COMPLIANCE REPORT
BY
THE MONITORING COMMITTEE***

***FOR SUBMISSION TO
THE HONORABLE SUPREME COURT OF
PAKISTAN***

REPORT DATE: November 5, 2021

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List of Abbreviations

BHU	Basic Health Unit
BPS	Basic Pay Scale
DEO	District Education Officer
DOC	District Oversight Committee
GD	Government Dispensary
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPD	Gallons Per Day
I&C	Implementation & Coordination wing of SGA&CD
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MCH	Mother & Child Health
NADRA	National Database Registration Authority
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
PHED	Public Health Engineering Department
RO	Reverse Osmosis
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECMC	Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company
SECP	Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan
SELD	School Education & Literacy Department
SGA&CD	Services, General Administration & Coordination Department
STR	Student-Teacher Ratio
TEO	Taluka Education Officer
THQ	Taluka Headquarters
SNE	Statement of New Expenditure
XEN	Executive Engineer
U5MR	Under-5 Mortality Rate

I. OVERVIEW

A. Formation of the Monitoring Committee

1. The honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan took suo moto notice on the reported deaths of infants and children in Tharparkar and started proceedings as Human Rights Case No. 71310-G/2018. In its order on December 27, 2018, the Court directed the Government of Sindh (henceforth the “Government”) to notify a Monitoring Committee that “shall have the mandate to arrange monthly visits or obtain monthly reports regarding the implementation of various initiatives dealing with public health, education and food situation.” The Government complied with the order and issued a notification on February 14, 2019, whereby it constituted the Monitoring Committee with the Secretary for Implementation & Coordination (I&C) at the Services, General Administration & Coordination Department (SGA&CD) as its Convener (Annexure A). The composition of the Monitoring Committee is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Composition of the Monitoring Committee

1	Secretary, I&C, SGA&CD, Government of Sindh	Convener
2	District and Sessions Judge, Tharparkar	Member
3	Commissioner, Mirpurkhas Division, Mirpurkhas	Member
4	Special Secretary (Health), Health Department, Government of Sindh	Member
5	Dr. Sono Khanghrani, a community development expert	Member
6	Prof. Dr. Syed Tipu Sultan, a former president of Pakistan Medical Association	Member

B. Monitoring Committee Meetings and its Field Visits

2. The Monitoring Committee (henceforth the “Committee”) immediately started its work and held monthly meetings and undertook field visits. The Convener of the Committee, Secretary, I&C, and other members personally went to Mithi, the district headquarters of Tharparkar, several times, and held all the Committee meetings in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Tharparkar. Between its first meeting on February 28, 2019, and its last meeting on February 27, 2020, the Committee met ten times in total, and issued several periodic reports. The sequence of the Committee’s meetings was, however, interrupted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns. As such, the Committee could not hold any meetings or undertake site visits between March 2020 and November 2020.

3. The Committee was able to hold its first post-COVID-19 lockdown meeting on December 17, 2020. The Convener of the Committee, Mr. Riaz Ahmed Siddiqui, had retired in October 2020

and, on the directions of the Chief Secretary, Sindh, the Additional Secretary, I&C, Dr. Imtiaz Bhatti, went to Mithi to hold that meeting. Table 2 lists the Committee's meetings date-wise.

Table 2 Monitoring Committee Meetings and its Field Visits

Meeting	Date	Field Visits
1 st Meeting	February 28, 2019	Nil
2 nd Meeting	March 13, 2019	The Convener and other Committee members visited the Amar Jagdesh High School, Mithi; the Main Government High School, Mithi; the Government Girls High School, Mithi; the Civil Hospital Mithi; a BHU and an RO plant near Mithi; and the Mithi Food Go-Down.
3 rd Meeting	April 24, 2019	The Convener and other Committee members visited the Civil Hospital, Mithi; the BHU Vakrio, Islamkot; the RO Plant @ Vakrio, Islamkot; the RO Plant @ Mankani, Islamkot; and the Water Supply Scheme @ Vakrio, Islamkot.
4 th Meeting	July 3, 2019	The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar was directed to inspect the sites and report progress in the next meeting of the Committee.
5 th Meeting	August 28, 2019	The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar briefed regarding his field visits.
6 th Meeting	October 9, 2019	The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar briefed regarding his field visits.
7 th Meeting	November 20, 2019	Nil
8 th Meeting	December 24, 2019	The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar briefed regarding his field visits.
9 th Meeting	January 16, 2020	Nil
10 th Meeting	February 27, 2020	The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar briefed regarding his field visits.
11 th Meeting	December 17, 2020	The Additional Secretary, I&C, and the Deputy Commissioner, Tharparkar, together visited various sites.

4. As shown in Table 2, the Committee undertook field visits to inspect public schemes and facilities. On other occasions, the Committee tasked the Deputy Commissioner of Tharparkar to undertake field visits to verify the progress reported by the representatives of concerned departments. The Committee continued to hold its monthly meetings in the district until its work was interrupted by the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown in March 2020. In the post-lockdown period, the Committee has been trying to regain its pre-pandemic momentum, but the intermittent surges in the number of COVID-19 cases, and the resultant government restrictions, has been a retarding factor. In addition, the new Chairman of the Monitoring Committee/ Secretary (I&C), Mr. Abdul Raheem Shaikh, was transferred within less than six months.

C. Periodic Reports of the Monitoring Committee

5. This *Compliance Report* discusses the Committee's activities during the last two years since it was formed in February 2019. The details of these activities have already been submitted through the Committee's quarterly and annual reports, which were duly and immediately forwarded to the office of Advocate General, Sindh for submission before the honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan.

6. As its modus operandi, the Committee issued notices with guidelines and schedule of the meetings to the concerned departments or project executing agencies, which in turn would submit their progress reports in the next meeting. The minutes of the Committee's regular meetings were incorporated in its seven periodic (quarterly/ annual) reports. Table 3 lists the reports the Committee compiled and submitted to the office of Advocate General, Sindh, for its timely submission to the honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Table 3 Quarterly and Annual Reports by the Monitoring Committee

#	Report	Date	Reference
1	1st Quarterly Report	March 2019	Annexure B
2	2nd Quarterly Report	May 2019	Annexure C
3	3rd Quarterly Report	November 2019	Annexure D
4	Annual Progress Report	December 2019	Annexure E
5	4th Quarterly Report	June 2020	Annexure F
6	5th Quarterly Report	September 2020	Annexure G
7	6th Quarterly Report	December 2020	Annexure H

7. This *Compliance Report* comprises seven sections. *Section I* presents an overview. Next four sections discuss the situation of health, education, food stock, and public health facilities in the district. *Section VI* discusses miscellaneous items such as the forest land and the scope of tourism in Tharparkar. *Section VII* titled "Way Forward" makes some recommendations to improve governance and offers concluding remarks. The report will be shared with all the concerned for compliance. In addition, the specific actions proposed in the report along with the timelines will also be shared with the concerned department heads. The Committee highly appreciates Dr. Imtiaz Bhatti, Additional Secretary, I&C, for writing this report and for his passionate hard work and time.

II. HEALTH FACILITIES

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

8. The Health Department provided interesting statistics regarding infant and child mortality in Tharparkar. According to them, the reports of deaths of infants and children were excessively highlighted. They claimed that during the last three years Tharparkar's infant mortality rate (IMR) and under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) were much less than those of the adjacent districts.

9. To support their contention, the Health Department submitted evidence from the data compiled through their management information system (MIS), which showed that in 2020 the Tharparkar's IMR was 11 and that of the adjacent districts of Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Badin was 14, 23 and 16, respectively. Similarly, the Tharparkar's U5MR was 16 and that of the districts of

Mirpurkhas and Badin was 59 and 96, respectively. In addition, the health department officials informed that a comparative study was conducted which found that only 2 percent (or 11) of the total recorded fatalities of 550 in 2018 among the neonates and infants in Tharparkar could be attributed to malnourishment among the expecting mothers, while 98 percent could be linked to the various diseases common among the children in the region. Further, the district health officials reported that even this low number of malnourishment-related deaths of infants and children in the district also include those of the children from the contiguous areas of other districts, whose populations benefit from the better-provisioned hospitals of Tharparkar. As reported by the Health Department, these “other-district” deaths are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 Under-5 Deaths of Non-Locals in Tharparkar

District	2018	2019	2020
Badin	2	6	2
Mirpurkhas (Digri, Jhudo, Naukot)	36	57	38
Umerkot (Kunri)	12	48	46
Total	50	111	86

10. The other highlights from the reports submitted by the Health Department are given below both in the narrative and tabular formats.

- i) Several health facilities have been made functional by providing equipment and human resource. The rest of the facilities remain nonfunctional largely due to the unavailability of trained staff.
- ii) Many government dispensaries (GDs) have been upgraded to basic health unit (BHU) and to BHU Plus – with considerably enhanced patient-care opportunities in the remote areas of the district.
- iii) To encourage health professionals to work in the district, the Government has instituted for them monthly hard-area allowances.
- iv) A satellite center of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) has been established in Mithi to provide round-the-clock services in the region.
- v) The Health Department trained an adequate number of community midwives (CMWs), lady health visitors (LHVs) and lady health workers (LHWs) and deployed them in the district to work for the malaria and TB control programs.
- vi) The PPHI Sindh – a not-for-profit organization that manages Government’s health facilities at the primary and secondary levels – has expanded its coverage to 34 percent

of the area in the district, while it has added more human resource and allied health facilities to its existing units.

- vii) A District Coordination Committee for Nutrition (DCCN) was notified on October 27, 2017. The committee oversees and coordinates the execution of various health sector initiatives such as the Accelerated Action Plan (AAP) for reduction of stunting and malnutrition, the Sindh Enhancing Response to Reduce Stunting Project (SERRS), the Multi-Sectoral Action for Nutrition (MSAN), and the Enhanced Nutrition for Mothers and Children (NSP).
- viii) The DCCN established two nutrition stabilization centers each at the Civil Hospital in Mithi and the THQ in Chachro in collaboration with the PPHI, HANDS and Shifa Foundation.

Table 5 Total Positions of Medical Staff in Tharparkar

Category	BPS	Sanctioned posts	Filled	Vacant
General cadre medics	20	1	1	0
	19	57	44	13
	18	117	32	85
	17	484	314	170
	Total	659	390	269
Special cadre medics	18-19	84	53	31
Para-medics	1 to 16	3,045	1,940	1,105

Table 6 Operational Status of Health Facilities

#	Health facilities	Total	Functional	Nonfunctional
1	District Hospital/ Civil Hospital	1	1	0
2	THQ Hospital	4	4	0
3	Maternity Home	3	2	1
4	Rural Health Center	2	2	0
5	Basic Health Unit (PPHI)	31	31	0
6	Government Dispensary (PPHI)	18	18	0
7	Government Dispensary (DOH)	333	215	118
8	GDS (DOH) newly handed over/ SNE submitted	25	0	25
9	Newly constructed/ upgraded BHU	9	9	0
10	Unani Shafa Khana	3	3	0
11	MCH Center	18	4	14
12	First Aid Medical Center (FAMC)	3	3	0
Total		450	292	158

Table 7 Vacancies of Gazetted Staff at the Civil Hospital, Mithi

#	Name of Post	BPS	Sanctioned	Filled	Vacant	Required
1	Additional Medical Superintendent	19	1	1	0	1
2	Senior Anesthetist	19	0	0	0	1
3	Senior Cardiologist	19	0	0	0	1
4	Senior Gynecologist	19	0	0	0	2
5	Senior Chest Specialist	19	0	0	0	1
6	Anesthetist	18	2	2	0	2
7	Gynecologist	18	3	2	1	2
8	Pediatrician	18	1	1	0	3
9	Radiologist	18	1	1	0	1
10	Senior Medical Officer Male/ Female	18	4	4	0	4
11	Senior Medicolegal Officer	18	1	0	1	3
12	Medical Officer	17	5	5	0	5
13	Medical Officer Male / Female	17	26	24	2	2
14	Women Medical Officer	17	8	7	1	5
15	Medicolegal Officer	17	2	1	1	2
16	Staff Nurse	16	19	12	7	21
Total Gazetted Positions				73	60	13
						56

Table 8 Vacancies of Non-Gazetted Staff at the Civil Hospital, Mithi

#	Name of Post	BPS	Sanctioned	Filled	Vacant	Required
1	Computer Operator	12	2	1	1	2
2	Dialysis Technician	9	2	0	2	2
3	Physiotherapy Technician	9	1	0	1	1
4	Laboratory Technician	9	3	3	0	2
5	Operation Theater Technician	9	3	3	0	2
6	X-Ray Technician	9	4	3	1	3
7	Dispenser	9	17	16	1	20
8	Lady Health Visitor	9	5	5	0	10
9	Midwife	6	7	5	2	5
10	Electrician	6	1	1	0	1
11	Driver	4	8	7	1	4
12	Plumber/ Helper	3	1	0	1	2
13	Generator Operator	2	1	1	0	2
14	Ward Servant Male/ Female	2	39	34	5	20
15	Dhobi	1	2	0	2	3
16	Naib Qasid	1	10	6	4	10
17	Security Guard	1	0	0	0	30
18	Sanitation Worker	1	30	17	13	20
Total Non-Gazetted Positions				136	102	34
						139

Table 9 Availability of Services for Patients

#	Services Available	Civil Hospital, Mithi	Taluka Hospital, Diplo	Taluka Hospital, Nagarparkar	Taluka Hospital, Chachro	RHC, Kheensar	RHC, Islamkot
1	Diagnostic Laboratory	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional
2	Dental Care	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional	NA	Functional
3	Emergency Services	Functional	NA	NA	NA	Yes	Yes
4	CCU	Functional	NA	NA	NA	NA	Partially functional
5	Dialysis unit	Functional	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	X-Ray	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional	Functional
7	C.T Scan	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	Diet for patients	Available	Available	Available	Available	NA	NA
9	Sanctioned Beds	74	40	20	20	4	20
	Available Beds	174	40	30	32	11	30

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

11. The health department officials claimed that the deaths of infants and children in the district were “over-portrayed” in the media. The Monitoring Committee has carefully scrutinized the figures provided by the Health Department regarding the IMR and U5MR and compared them with the data available from some eminent surveys in the country – such as the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) and the UNICEF’s Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). The Committee has observed that the number of infants and children dying in Tharparkar, in fact, is not that high if compared with other areas of the country with similar geographical and socioeconomic features. Such comparison is elaborated in Table 10.

Table 10 Child and Infant Mortality Comparison

Population of District Tharparkar	1,649,661 (as per Census 2017)				
Pakistan's average birthrate	2.9% (as per Census 2017)				
Tharparkar's Crude Birthrate (2017)	$(2.9/100) \times 1,649,661 = 47,840/\text{year}$				
Age group	Estimated mortality rate in Tharparkar (PDHS* 2017-18)	Estimated mortality rate in Tharparkar (MICS** Sindh 2018)	Actual number of deaths reported by hospitals in Tharparkar		
			2018	2019	2020
Infants	62/1,000 or approx. 2,966	82/1,000 or approx. 3,923	12/1,000 or 550	15/1,000 or 735	14/1,000 or 654
Under 5	74/1,000 or approx. 3,540	104/1,000 or approx. 4,975	13/1,000 or 642	17/1,000 or 832	16/1,000 or 758

*Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey

** Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (by UNICEF)

12. Nonetheless, the Government and other stakeholders started paying special attention to the district, which led to some improvement in the health services there over the last two years. But still much needs to be done. The Monitoring Committee has assessed the situation and has critically examined reports it received. The reports submitted both by the district administration and the

health department authorities, however, do not depict an encouraging picture of the situation in the district.

13. A quick look at Table 5 will render a highly revealing picture on the availability of medical staff in the district. Among the general cadre medical officers, still 85 (or 73%) of the 117 sanctioned positions in BPS 18 are vacant, as are 170 (or 35%) of the 484 of those in BPS 17. Of the special cadre medical staff, 31 (or 37%) of the 84 sanctioned positions in BPS 18 and 19 are vacant. The same grim picture is portrayed of the positions of paramedical staff. Out of the 333 government dispensaries, an astonishing one-third still remain nonfunctional. As most of these nonfunctional dispensaries are situated in the remote arid plains, the situation in these areas remains highly deplorable (Table 6). Equally shocking is the situation of mother and child health (MCH) centers. The district has 18 MCH centers and only 4 of them that happen to be in the proximity of urban areas are functional – which impels one to draw an easy inference that ***all the remote, desert-area MCH centers in the district are not operational*** (Table 6).

14. As far as the availability of facilities and equipment is concerned the situation is equally discouraging (Table 9). The whole district has only one dialysis center, which is in the district headquarters hospital of Mithi. Until the end of 2020, not a single hospital in the district had a functional CT scan machine. To deal with the increasing load of patients, all the district and rural health centers have arranged many more makeshift beds than their official budget provides for.

15. In addition, the district has no full-fledged blood bank even at its largest, district headquarters hospital.

C. Actions Required Regarding Health Facilities

16. Following actions are required of the Health Department to improve working of the medical facilities in the district.

- i) The hospitals in the province are in dire need of effective management committees comprising health experts, managers, and prominent local people from all walks of life – professionals (lawyers, doctors, academics, etc.), retired government officials (civil servants, judges, teachers, etc.), and civil society representatives. The Government has created management committees for a few hospitals, but their membership has not been based on ground realities. If the Government moves toward establishing non-political, highly professional committee for the hospitals in Tharparkar, this Monitoring

Committee will gladly create the JDs and SOPs for such committees. The start made for Tharparkar would serve as a template for replication in other parts of the province.

- ii) The Works & Services Department needs to be pushed toward better performance as they keep extending the deadline for completing the two under-construction blocks of the Taluka Hospital in Islamkot, which is causing difficulties to the people of area.
- iii) Due to the unavailability of trained people in the area, many key positions in most health facilities are vacant. As reflected in Table 5, 98 (or 55%) of 174 positions in the district of general cadre doctors of BPS 18 and 19 remain unfilled. Extraordinary situations require extraordinary measures. It is the job of the policymakers to come up with creative solutions for the benefit of the people. The Health Department should, as a special case for Tharparkar, consider doubling the monetary incentive offered to health professionals in the province so that the district is able to attract qualified medical and paramedical staff from other districts.
- iv) At least the vacancies in the Civil Hospital Mithi, which is the largest hospital in the district, should be urgently filled. As Table 7 and Table 8 show, some very important positions in that hospital are vacant.
- v) The Health Department needs to urgently provide the Civil Hospital of Mithi with additional budget for keeping its Central Oxygen System running and for the POL and maintenance of its ambulances and generators. **As shown in Table 9, the hospital manages about 100 more beds than its sanctioned number of 74 beds – which means the hospital is making do with less than half the budget it should be getting.** The hospital in Mithi also needs more funds for running its Pathology Lab and Dialysis Unit. The hospital's highly underfunded Dialysis Unit has eight dialysis machines and caters to the requirements of not only Tharparkar, but also the proximal areas of Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Badin districts. The Monitoring Committee has learned that the Civil Hospital's staff manages to keep its various facilities running through personal financial contributions and the donations received. The Secretary Health should urgently provide the hospital with additional funds. The medical superintendent of the hospital has multiple times written to the Health Department's higher authorities for providing additional funds.

- vi) Many BHUs of Tharparkar have been nonfunctional because a large number of positions remain unfilled due to either the Government's strict recruitment rules or the bans on new appointments. Since it is a remote district along the province's eastern periphery, which is mostly comprised of vast expanses of arid land and whose health facilities are in a highly precarious condition, the district deserves to be afforded a one-time waiver to make recruitment of medical staff in relaxation of the extant rules. Especially there is a dire need to appoint staff such as naib qasids, drivers, watchmen, lab technicians and x-ray machine operators on emergency basis.
- vii) The hospital in Mithi received an incinerator in 2007. But the authorities failed to concurrently provide any budget for the incinerator's operational costs, and the hospital's staff. This gas-powered incinerator needs to keep an extremely high temperature, which requires high consumption of natural gas worth thousands of rupees a day. The staff in the hospital has only been able to run the machine with their personal financial contributions. The Government is required to not only make proper budgetary allocations for the incinerator, but also take action against the personnel who failed to make proper budgetary allocation in this regard.
- viii) The Civil Hospital of Mithi needs to be urgently provided a modern blood bank with all allied blood diagnostic and transfusion services.
- ix) Still 158 out of 450 health facilities in the district are nonfunctional. But most of these nonfunctional facilities are situated in the remote rural areas, where the situation is *highly critical*. It is interesting to note that many of these facilities remain closed only because no-one in the department bothered to prepare a Statement of New Expenditure (SNE) for them. Both the Secretary Health and Secretary Finance should be required to submit their explanation as to why failing to prepare SNEs for the newly constructed facilities does not amount to misconduct – especially when such failure causing delay in the operationalization of key facilities at hospitals may result into loss of life. They are required to prepare and get approved the SNEs in the forthcoming budget.
- x) A rationalization of facilities in collaboration with the School Education & Literacy Department (SELD) may be undertaken to swap the buildings for their optimal use. The health department buildings that lay unutilized/ closed may be handed over to the SELD for setting up schools. Similarly, the school buildings that are redundant or extra and,

thus, can be dispensed with may be handed over to the Health Department for setting up basic health units.

- xi) Most of the residential flats constructed for doctors in the Civil Hospital of Mithi are illegally occupied by non-medical staff from outside. These flats need to be refurbished and restored to the hospital administration for housing its general and specialist cadre doctors.
- xii) The Government should establish new residential colonies for health staff and arrange for appropriate housing for doctors and specialists at each of the taluka hospitals, RHCs and BHUs.
- xiii) All medical superintendents/ heads of hospitals in the district should be held liable for failing to report regarding nonfunctional/ out-of-order equipment or ambulances in their facilities. **Once they report, the higher authorities responsible for taking corrective measures or releasing funds for repair should be held accountable for any delays on their part.**
- xiv) During its meetings the Committee was apprised of the perilous condition of one of the blocks of the Civil Hospital, Mithi. The Committee undertook a visit and directed that immediate measures be taken to safeguard the life of the staff and the patients in the building but noting so far has been done. The Secretary Health and the Secretary Works and Services owe their answers to the Committee regarding this.
- xv) The construction of the paeds and female wards has long been left unfinished. The Committee has learned that the work was started without preparing a PC-1 – in a haphazard manner. Neither a budgetary provision was made for beds and air-conditioning nor was any allocation made for a central oxygen system. Even the walls, floors and pavements temporarily torn down to make room for the entry of tractors and other heavy machines have yet not been restored. Even more, the construction team installed temporary wiring for electricity, which rendered the building prone to accidents. The Works & Services Chief Engineer and his XEN visited the building and declared it dangerous, but no remedial measures have been taken. It has been learned that the Medical Superintendent of the Civil Hospital has sent many letters to the higher authorities for getting this work completed, but without avail.

- xvi) The newly established taluka of Dahli is both the farthest from the district headquarters and the least developed in terms of infrastructure. The Government Dispensary Khem-Jo-Par, housed in a District Council building, was converted to THQ Hospital several years ago when the taluka Dahli (at Khem-Jo-Par) was created. There is no good explanation as to why despite its upgradation on paper the hospital's formal SNE has not been prepared or got approved. **The matter is being unnecessarily delayed. The hospital in Dahli may be provided infrastructure, facilities, and a residential colony on high priority through a special SNE.**
- xvii) Similarly, the RHC in Islamkot was upgraded to THQ hospital in 2012, but it has yet not been provided an SNE.
- xviii) The PPHI has been requesting for delivering to them the 59 dispensaries for operational control, which was earlier agreed to by the Health Department – but the same is being inordinately and inexplicably delayed despite this Committee's repeated exhortations. The Secretary Health should have a cogent explanation for this delay.
- xix) The PPHI has occupied some portion of the Mithi Hospital which it is using as its go-down and has not vacated despite requests. This portion needs to be got vacated and may be used for establishing a separate Children's Hospital for the district. The district administration should act immediately and get these premises vacated.
- xx) The Trauma Center in Diplo was established some years ago, but it remains nonfunctional. The authorities should take steps to operationalize it on priority.
- xxi) The building of THQ Hospital Diplo, too, is in a dilapidated condition which poses a potential danger to the life of staff working there. The Government should immediately take steps to provide a new building for it.

III. EDUCATION FACILITIES

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

17. The highlights from the reports on the progress in establishing new schools and upgrading or providing facilities to the existing schools in the district are given as under.

- i) The condition of schools and the quality of education imparted has improved. This claim, according to the education officials, is borne out by the growth in the number of enrolled students (as given in the charts below).

- ii) Fresh batches of junior elementary school teachers (JESTs) and early childhood teachers (ECTs) were appointed.
- iii) General repair was performed on more than 500 school units during 2018-2020.
- iv) Several projects of renovation and development were undertaken to provide schools with infrastructural facilities such as toilets, boundary walls, etc.
- v) The work on the building of Cadet College Mithi has been in progress.
- vi) The hiring of lecturers/ subject specialist in the College Education Department through the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC) is underway.
- xxii) To provide high-quality tertiary education in the area, a 300-acre piece of land was allocated to establish a full-fledged engineering university in Tharparkar – and until then a temporary campus of NED University was established in the Cultural Complex of Mithi.

Table 11 Primary Education

Description	2018	2019	2020
Functional schools	2,989	2,991	2,524*
Non-functional schools	505	448	1,399**
Vacancies(all cadres)	1,423	1,448	1,232
Total enrollment	143,487	148,578	154,728
Sanctioned strength of teaching Staff	4,647	4,647	4,010***
Sanctioned strength of non-teaching staff	1,090	1,090	1,100
Schools with electricity	570	550	572
Schools with boundary wall	1,109	1,111	1,006

*Nonviable schools and middle schools, which were transferred to elementary side, excluded.
 **Nonviable schools included.
 ***637 teachers were transferred to elementary side.

Table 12 Elementary, Secondary & Higher Secondary (ESHS) Schools

Description	2018	2019	2020
Total functional schools	177	198	208
Non-functional schools	28	25	22
Schools without SNE	13	22	26
Vacancy position (all cadres)	602	784	643
Total enrollment	45,606	48,206	49,130
Sanctioned strength of teaching staff	2,242	2,843	3,621
Sanctioned strength of non-teaching staff	597	698	799
Electricity available	32	41	45
Schools without boundary wall	18	15	10

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

18. Not much progress has been made regarding primary and secondary education in the district. Most of the schools closed remain so not just because the SELD has not been able to recruit enough new teachers, but also because the pace of rationalization of primary school buildings and facilities is very slow. Some areas still happen to have an excess of buildings at very short distances, while many others do not have even a one-room shelter.

19. The data on enrolment in the primary schools presented by the SELD officials is either vague or counterintuitive. For example, while the total primary school enrolment has been shown to have risen by about 8% since 2018, the number of “functional” schools has been shown to have fallen by about 16%.

20. Although the drop in the number of functional schools makes sense if viewed in conjunction with the SELD’s assertion that some nonviable schools were transferred to the category “nonfunctional,” the claimed surge in the primary school enrolment the SELD as reflected in their reports flies in the face of both a critical analysis of the data and the information regarding ground realities observed by this Committee – which indicate that the primary school enrolment actually has gone down in rural areas of the district.

21. Schools generally present a very dismal outlook with visible unhygienic conditions both inside and outside. The Committee received reports that many schools in the rural areas do not have even desks and students are made to sit on the floor. The School Management Committee (SMC) funds are either left unutilized or they are not used for the purposes they are allocated for in these schools.

22. The department has failed to implement its own approved student-teacher ratio (STR) policy, with a result that some schools have fewer than a dozen students per teachers and others have more than 50 and sometimes 100 students per teacher. The solution is simple: The teachers in the low STR schools can be transferred to the high STR schools. But the will to do so is not there due to both political factors and incompetence.

23. It has also been learned that many of the top SELD officials in the district get posted through patronage – sans merit, competence, or professional integrity.

C. Actions Required Regarding Educational Facilities

24. The following are the specific recommendations of the Committee.

- i) The data on enrolment in the primary schools presented by the SELD officials need to be counterchecked. The matter is too important to be left at the mercy of the education functionaries so that they keep fudging the numbers with impunity to conceal their incompetence. Similarly, an independent survey needs to be commissioned to confirm the number of nonfunctional and nonviable schools, available facilities at the schools, and the actual number of SELD teaching and nonteaching staff in the district. The Bureau of Statistics may be required to take the lead in the survey. The data should then be got verified by a nongovernment, third party through a random sampling.
- ii) The SELD should follow its STR policy in letter and spirit. In any other country with serious enough policymakers any deviations from the STR policy would elicit harsh punitive actions for the responsible people. The Committee has learned that the STR policy was approved by the provincial Government and is supported by the international donors. But it has been persistently violated everywhere in the province, not least in Tharparkar.
- iii) The Government should also make school-based appointments of teachers with fixed minimum tenure. Any teacher seeking to be transferred to another school before completing their tenure be asked to resign or be dismissed.
- iv) Another matter brought to the notice of the Committee was the low number of qualifying candidates in the IBA-proctored recruitment test for appointment as teachers in some backward areas of the district. In such cases, the Committee recommends that the passing floors in the test for such areas be brought down from 60 percent to 45 percent.
- v) There is also an urgent need for rationalization of available school buildings, as in some areas more than the required number of buildings was constructed and in others not a single school building is available. The SELD has been too slow in clustering and merging of schools to make them viable as agreed in previous meetings. The Secretary SELD needs to take this up on priority.
- vi) As recommended in the “Health Facilities” section above, the SELD should undertake a rationalization drive for its facilities in collaboration with the Health Department to exchange the buildings for their optimal use. The school buildings that are redundant or extra and, thus, can be dispensed with may be handed over to the Health Department for

setting up basic health units. Similarly, the health department buildings that lay unutilized/ closed may be handed over to the SELD for setting up schools.

- vii) The SELD has reported that 26 of its middle/ secondary schools in the district remain nonfunctional because their SNEs have not been approved. The Secretary SELD and the Secretary Finance owe an explanation for this and are required to take corrective steps in the forthcoming budget.
- viii) The pace at which the SELD is providing boundary walls, latrines, drinking water facility and electricity connection to the schools in the district is too slow. When the Education Works branch was added to the Education Department many decades ago, it was hoped that it would speed up the construction of buildings and the provision of facilities for schools. The concerned officials of the department's Education Works branch need to be held accountable for it.
- ix) It is also highly pertinent here that the policy on providing SMC funds and their utilization be improved. The possibility of imposing penalties for non-utilization of the funds, too, may be explored. Further, to reduce the involvement of influential people in the utilization of SMC funds, the possibility of third-party fund utilization may also be explored. One way to do this is including more civil society notables and retired government officials in these committees.
- x) Unless the postings of district and taluka heads in a school district (including those of the engineers tasked to construct or upgrade school buildings) are made purely on merit, we will not see any improvement in our education. The authorities need to realize that it is the quality of human resource that makes difference; otherwise, all expenses made on any type of infrastructure will only go to waste. It is highly recommended that the culture of making arbitrary transfers in the SELD be done away with once for all and any violation be shown to bring harsh punishments top-down. If a DEO or any other senior official is not good enough or incompetent, and thus needs to be transferred, then why just transfer him – why not punish him under the relevant laws? Such “incompetent” person then should not be allowed to remain in service and keep spoiling the future of our students, our next generations!
- xi) The Government should develop a score card to monitor the performance of SELD administration functionaries and only those with the best scores should be given key

assignments. In addition to the numbers on the scorecard, the Government should chalk out an elaborate set of posting and transfer criteria for the positions of Director, DEO and TEO and strictly follow such benchmarks while putting in place key education administrators in Tharparkar.

- xii) The hiring of lecturers/ subject specialist in the College Education Department through the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC) needs to be expedited.
- xiii) The Secretary Colleges and the department's Education Works branch should expedite the construction of the Cadet College Mithi and remove all the bottlenecks urgently.
- xiv) The Universities & Boards Department, NED University and Chief Engineer Education Works should not further delay starting the construction of the engineering university in the district at the specified location. The parties should immediately hold coordination meetings and prepare a feasible schedule and share with this Committee.

IV. THE WHEAT STOCK AND FOOD SITUATION

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

25. The salient features of the reports received from the Food Department and the district administration are given below.

- i) Because of the fewer rains in 2018, the Government declared 167 dehs [*a sub-unit of the union council*] of District Tharparkar as “Calamity Affected Areas.”
- ii) The Government announced a relief package and provided a 50-kg bag for each family every month for 3 months in phases as shown in ii). The eligible recipients were identified taluka-, union council- and village-wise with help from NADRA and the PDMA.

Table 13 Wheat Distribution and its Phases

#	Taluka	Phases					
		Families	1 st Phase	2 nd Phase	3 rd Phase	4 th Phase	Total
1	Mithi	43,718	40,750	40,577	40,502	20,151	141,980
2	Islamkot	46,072	42,296	44,450	44,383	26,435	157,565
3	Diplo	31,300	28,948	30,134	30,161	17,028	106,271
4	Kaloi	16,726	15,247	15,695	15,815	7,675	54,429
5	Chachro	47,097	45,224	45,163	44,963	8,688	144,038
6	Dahli	32,152	31,756	32,250	32,250	0	96,256
7	N. Parkar	59,087	47,841	52,427	55,040	14,076	169,384
Total		276,152	252,062	260,696	263,114	94,053	869,925

- iii) The Food Department maintains an adequate quantity of food/ grains stock and currently no shortage of supply is anticipated.
- iv) The Government has set up stalls to make available subsidized flour/ wheat in every town of the district.
- v) The Government also supplied ration bags to daily wage earners in the district who were affected due to the COVID-19 lockdown (Table 14).

Table 14 Distribution of Ration Bags

#	Taluka	No. of Beneficiaries/ Bags Distributed
1	Mithi	2,585
2	Islamkot	2,380
3	Diplo	2,105
4	Kaloi	2,295
5	Chachro	2,983
6	Dahli	2,329
7	Nagarparkar	3,789
Total		18,466

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

26. It is heartening that the situation regarding malnutrition and drought has substantially improved in Tharparkar. Some of the credit goes to the stakeholders such as the district administration, the provincial departments, nongovernmental organizations, and other entities active in the district. The collaborative efforts of these actors helped mitigate the situation. Nonetheless, the situation has also improved because the region has lately seen an upsurge in the average rainfall.

27. The stakeholders' efforts to improve the food situation in the district are commendable, but they serve to provide only short-term remedies. To sustainably resolve the issue, a multi-indicator monitoring system needs to be installed that can accurately – and sufficiently in advance – forecast the water and food situation in the area.

28. It is high time the Provincial and Federal Governments sincerely attempted to transform themselves into the twenty-first century mold. They should reorganize their ministries/ departments dealing with food and agriculture on modern lines so that they are able to think creatively and adopt out-of-the-box solutions. If nothing else, just by imitating the best practices from around the world, nice and feasible mechanisms can be put in place.

29. Finally, it cannot be overemphasized that we need to better manage various types of subsidies the Government doles out and the distribution of relief supplies. Putting in place a research-based approach involving modern cost-benefit analysis techniques is the need of time.

C. Actions Required Regarding Food Situation

30. The following actions may be taken to better prepare for any food emergency in the future.

- i) A multi-indicator monitoring system needs to be installed that can accurately – and sufficiently in advance – forecast the water and food situation in the area. For the purpose, an advanced Research Center be established to constantly monitor situation regarding the rain fall and other factors that impinge on the size of food crops and grains that can be available in Tharparkar.
- ii) To ensure a fair and efficient distribution of future relief packages – if need be – the proposed Research Center should create a dynamic database which would constantly update the eligibility of the aid recipients keeping in view economic situation and its impacts on the local families and communities. Such an approach would, in the future, sufficiently reduce the complaints of favoritism or maladministration in the distribution of relief supplies.
- iii) The Sindh's Food Department has off and on been drawing a lot of flak for "incompetence." It is important that the department involve advanced policy analysis tools to plan for foods shortages and surpluses.

V. PUBLIC HEALTH/ DRINKING WATER FACILITIES

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

31. A summary of the reports received on the status of public health and water supply facilities in the district is given below.

- i) The Government has notified a District Oversight Committee (DOC) under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Tharparkar. The committee has held 18 meetings to review the status of installation and operation of reverse osmosis (RO) plants and maintenance of water supply and drainage schemes.
- ii) On orders of the Water Commission, the defunct Special Initiative Department and the Sindh Coal Authority installed 635 RO Plants in the district. These RO plants are

presently under the administrative control of the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED).

- iii) The work on remaining 237 RO plants is underway through Messrs. Pak Oasis, a contractor.
- iv) In addition, 31 of the existing water supply schemes were specified for rehabilitation – of which work on nine of them has been completed.
- v) In the taluka Nagarparkar, 24 storage and small recharge dams have been constructed, which provide drinking water in about 45 villages. As these dams store rainwater from the Karoonjhar hills, they have caused a considerable rise in the water table in the area – making agricultural production possible through the wells. Another ten small dams of the same type are under construction in the taluka.
- vi) About 40,000 acres of land have so far been brought under cultivation due to these dams. When the whole dams project is completed, another 85,000 acres of land will come under cultivation and 87 more villages will get supply of drinking water.
- vii) Local NGOs and INGOs are providing solar submersible pumps, water wells, water wheels, and hand pumps in the district.

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

32. Some improvement in the situation has been noticed. For example, because of the construction of rainwater storage dams in Nagarparkar, dozens of villages in the area have got access to water for drinking and agriculture.

33. But the pace of construction/ rehabilitation of the RO plants goes too slow to be justified. Even the survey to determine the functionality of RO plants has been much delayed. Similarly, the work of water supply schemes has been very slow. Out of 31 schemes, only nine have been completed.

34. These are serious issues, and it looks like the DOC under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner has not been able to deliver any significant results due to a lack of cooperation by the PHED. The contractor, Messrs. Pak Oasis, too, shares a large portion of the blame for the sluggish pace on the rehabilitation of the remaining RO plants.

C. Actions Required Regarding Public Health Facilities

35. To give a boost to the pace of construction and rehabilitation of these schemes, the following measures are required to be taken by the stakeholders.

- i) Any further delays in completing the water supply and irrigation schemes cannot be condoned. The Secretary of PHED should work out a tight, enforceable schedule with the contractor M/s Pak Oasis to speed up the construction work on the RO plants.
- ii) The district administration and the PHED should complete the ongoing joint survey/ verification of the RO plants immediately so that all nonfunctional plants could be operationalized without any further delay.
- iii) The RO plants that have become operational can only become sustainable if their ownership and operation is handed over to the local communities. The Monitoring Committee has discussed this possibility in almost all its meetings. The Secretary PHED and the district administration should take concrete steps toward implementing this requirement of the time within three months.
- iv) The District Water Testing laboratory has been established, but it has not been operationalized as no maintenance staff has been hired. The Secretary PHED is liable to taking measures to operationalize the lab immediately.
- v) The Secretary PHED needs to take bold steps toward the completion of the water supply schemes whose rehabilitation work has been going very slow.
- vi) The Government should consider recycling of the wastewater and sewage generated in the towns in the districts and use it for agricultural purposes. The modern recycling methods are quite simple and do not cost much. The proposed recycling will be beneficial both for the economy and environment. The Public Health Engineering Department in collaboration with the district administration and civil society organizations should prepare a plan for such initiatives.

VI. SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF THAR COAL

36. The coal reserves in Tharparkar have both economic and strategic value for the country. The Federal and Provincial Governments have taken decisive steps toward exploiting the coal reserves to meet the country's electricity needs. The development and exploitation of these reserves has resulted in a huge social, economic, and environmental change in the area and affected

the local population and communities in a number of ways. There have been indications that the local population has had both a difficult and beneficial experience in dealing with the operations of the project. The Committee asked the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) representatives to share their point of view regarding the concerns raised by the community.

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

37. The representatives of the SECMC participated in the meetings of the Monitoring Committee. They informed that the SECMC is a joint-venture company of the Government of Sindh and six private sector entities (Engro, House of Habib, HubCo, Habib Bank Ltd., and two Chinese companies, namely, CMEC and CPIH). The SECMC representatives stressed upon their commitment to uphold the rights of the local population and their belief that the real stakeholders of the Thar Coal Project are the local Thari people. They informed that the company was doing its best to ensure that the population living within its project area became “Project Beneficiaries” as opposed to “Project Affectees.”

38. The highlights of the SECMC activities, as reported by their representatives, are given as under.

- i) As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, the SECMC has established the Thar Foundation, a not-for-profit entity, under Section 42 of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). The Thar Foundation works in partnership with local communities to build a model of participatory and inclusive development, which has not been very common in the history of corporate sector in Pakistan.
- ii) The Thar Foundation’s community development program is aimed at achieving UN’s most relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) primarily for Block-II and eventually making the entire Islamkot Taluka the first SDG compliant Taluka of Pakistan with the support of the Government by 2024.
- iii) The SECMC is a responsible company, which, while ensuring and compliance to all applicable environmental laws and rules, is making utmost efforts for further improvement of the area. If any minor loss or harm is caused, in any case to the local communities, the company will duly compensate them and address the issue in line with the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP).
- iv) First time in the history of Pakistan, direct beneficiaries have been paid an annual compensation of Rs.100,000 for the lifetime. The landowners whose lands have been

acquired have been compensated with amounts four times the local market rates. More than 95 percent payments have been made through the local Revenue Department, while the rest are under process due to the Foti Khata (heirship registration) or litigation issues.

- v) This project is designed so that the local population is not much dislocated. Looking to the spatial extent and chronological length of the project, the fact that only 500 households of just two villages of Senhri Dars and Tharyo Halepoto will be relocated speaks volumes about the thorough planning involved in mitigating the negative effects of the project. In Phase-1, every married couple has been allotted house built on a 1100-yard area at New Senhri Dars Resettlement Village. A total of 172 families have been resettled. The New Senhri Dars Resettlement Village has been provided with all the basic amenities which any urban center can have – such as schools, a health clinic, two RO plants each with 20,000 GPD capacity, electricity through solar panels, sewerage system, solar streetlights, a mosque and a mandir, community centers for men and women, market, bus stops, and so on. The second village Thahryo Halepoto is scheduled to be resettled by 2023.
- vi) Almost one individual from every household in the vicinity is employed or associated with the project directly or indirectly. Out of 4,500 employees in different capacities from unskilled labor to management positions, 71 percent belongs to Tharparkar. Thari youth are working on a senior level management and engineering positions in our operations. No other mineral sector company in Sindh has provided such big share in jobs to local people.
- vii) Instead of awarding contracts to influential of urban centers, SECMC has developed and trained dozens of local vendors to get contracts of various nature. Contract worth Rs. 2.5 billion have been awarded to local vendors, which has not only bettered the income level of locals but has created hundreds of employment opportunities.
- viii) The Thar Foundation has a vision to make Block-II compliant to SDG targets under priority goals of the Government. These goals are focused on basic areas of human development such as health, education, drinking water, livelihood, and women empowerment. This objective is being achieved by creating an inclusive development model. Provision of necessities has been ensured across the operational area to a population of around 25,000, where 100 percent population have access to quality

education, basic health facilities and drinking water supply through RO plants and in only few areas through water bowsers.

- ix) Beyond mandatory compliance, both Thar coal mining and power projects are aligned with national regulations and international protocols. Three Environmental Impact Assessment Studies on Coal Mining, Power Plant and Resettlement Villages have been submitted to the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency. Adhering to Sindh Coal Mine Rules 2016, provision of adequate safety and health facilities to mine workers have been ensured.
- x) A special initiative of Thar Million Trees project has been started under which more than 700,000 trees have been planted through an intensive care approach resulting a 60-70 percent survival rate in highly adverse climatic conditions. This model has been appreciated by UN, IUCN, and the provincial Government.

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

39. Pakistan's environmental laws and procedures do not adequately assess the environmental and social impact of a project. The procedures do not prioritize an adequate response to public's concerns. Moreover, these have limited follow up structures to counter the negative impacts of any project. During its meetings, the Committee learned of the concerns of the local communities. They fear displacement, loss of livelihoods, loss of assets, especially personal/family and communal land, highhandedness by authorities, and change in social fabric due to in-migration. Locals fear the development activity may result in barren land depriving them of access to agriculture and livestock grazing. Coal development has also resulted in agriculture lands being sold out to private entities.

C. Actions Required Regarding the Thar Coal-Related Activities

40. The following actions are proposed to be taken in respect of the Thar Coal.

- i) Community is the natural stakeholder of Thar resources including coal. They should be taken on board on all development activities.
- ii) An institutionalized system of guarantees should be developed to protect local people's rights for any development and infrastructure project in Thar.

- iii) Trainings and capacity building programs need to be initiated to train the youth so they can take part in development projects. The local youth should get special quota for access to higher education and technical and vocational education.
- iv) EIA, as a process, has been a failure in assessing the negative impacts and providing for effective environmental protection. There is need for a comprehensive scientific research around environmental impacts of development projects, in addition to a survey of social and right impact. Projects that do not have communities' consensus should not be executed.
- v) Thari people do not want to be dependent on rain forever. A system of channeling river water through construction of new canals and laying of pipelines for drinking, as well as agriculture purposes needs to be developed. This would provide better opportunities for livelihood stability and expansion.
- vi) Business opportunities should be provided to the local people on a priority basis by providing them incentives and financial support.
- vii) The provincial Government has released food packs for the humans but there is no support for livestock and local animals. There is a need of permanent mechanism for fodder banks, and protection of grazing grounds for livestock.
- viii) A comprehensive plan should be chalked out in consultation with local communities and local administration to address the concerns of the local population regarding migration from other parts of country, which local population fears would convert them into minorities and bring a widespread demographic change in the area. These apprehensions need to be taken seriously by the Government and addressed.
- ix) The aquifers of the region need to be protected and enhanced. The process of coal extraction requires dewatering of the aquifers which may also destroy the rain-fed layer that is a major source of water for the local community. It is not entirely plausible how the reservoirs built through effluent disposal system can replace source of water for the community coming from the natural aquifers.
- x) The Government has allocated Rs. 72 billion for infrastructure development of Thar coal. This development has come with its own social cost including damaging of the environment and communities' displacement, among others. The Government must

allocate 2 percent of this cost for community development. The plan for this development needs to be prepared in consultation with local stakeholders.

- xi) There is an urgent need for land settlement in Thar. The absence of a land settlement policy has gravely compromised the protection and interests of the local community. There has been no land settlement in the region despite Thar experiencing major migration following the 1965 and 1971 wars. The two episodes that have followed no subsequent land settlement have also led to divergence in people's understanding of land ownership. It is extremely important to devise a land settlement plan that could enable fair claim and ownership of the local community to their land. The plan should also enable claim to the commons/goachar land.
- xii) It is well established that migration in Tharparkar is a regular phenomenon. Seasonal migration and internal migration for livelihoods also contributes to the local economy through remittances. However, there is no local support system to address the need for orientation and skill building for those aspiring to migrate for economic reasons. It is proposed that an orientation institute be established in Tharparkar to impart basic knowledge and understanding of migration process and destinations for the people of Thar.
- xiii) A Thar research and extension unit exclusively focused on socio-economic and cultural factors of the region is critical to guide the process of change currently taking place in the region. Studying the process of change may enable the unit to identify the challenges generated by it. Recommendations flowing from such a study may contribute effectively towards initiatives and plans for socio-economic support infrastructure to assist the local communities with transition in the broader environment.
- xiv) To establish an accurate assessment of the environmental damage in the region due to coal development, urban expansion, and population increase, a scientific research center be established. Data generated by such a center may enable the public and private stakeholders to develop a plan to mitigate the environmental damage in the region and guide development plans prioritizing environmental considerations.
- xv) Any commitment for development in Thar must be reflected in efforts for diversification of the local economy. Linking this with current range of local economic activities is a suggestion for development of an industrial base and supply chain in Tharparkar serving

the local livestock trade. Key sectors covered by this industrialization is milk production and processing of livestock hide. Thar Foundation has the resources to lead this process.

xvi) Similarly, linking of local agriculture with urban areas, especially Karachi with a large market base, also needs to be taken up to pursue diversification of the local economy based on local resources and expertise.

xvii) Coal development is leading to a host of social changes reflected in rising land prices, rise of capitalism and consumerism, expanding rich-poor divide, marginalization of asset-less, non-literate and poorly skilled communities. There are still villages in the region where not a single person is literate. The state has no answer as to how the future of the local communities that may require initiatives to absorb these changes will be dealt with. A development model that seeks to find solution of a region's progress only in development of an overpriced and environmentally damaging coal power project is completely unfeasible. The Government must develop a comprehensive program to facilitate various social development through access to education, community infrastructure, mobility and nutrition and health to enable the local community to respond productively to these changes.

xviii) While Thar Coal may be merely employing a section local community in the coal development projects, the infrastructure supporting the coal development including transport and supply chain businesses have no representation from the local communities. There is a need for a study on means to facilitate local businesses to attach with the project needs to be carried out to enhance local participation in a project that is being touted as promoting the wellbeing and secure future of the region.

xix) There is limited information and knowledge on the status of implementation of labor laws in Thar Coal projects. Workers from the local community are predominantly involved in manual labor which requires payment of minimum wages, overtime provision, health and safety provisions, anti-sexual harassment laws, secure terms of employment and right to unionization, among others. There is no information on what labor laws govern the project that is built on a public-private partnership model. It is reported that all employment is carried out through contract system that leaves the local communities vulnerable to exploitation.

- xx) Greater transparency and debate on the subject are critical to advance the wellbeing of the local population engaged in the project.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

A. Views of the Concerned Authorities

41. Given below is the summary of discussion on several other matters during the Monitoring Committee meetings and the responses received from the concerned authorities.

- i) The Forest Department has set aside seven pieces of land/ blocks in Tharparkar as “open grazing” fields for local farmers.
- ii) The district administration has imposed Section 144 against cutting and transportation of protected trees.
- iii) Thousands of plants have been provided to farmers and government offices for plantation in the last two years.
- iv) The district administration is also keeping a vigilant eye over the private money lenders to prevent poor people from falling into a vicious spiral of debt.
- v) The State Bank of Pakistan has instructed the microfinance banks to provide relief to their borrowers in the district.
- vi) There are many tourist destinations in Tharparkar which attracted large number of visitors in 2020. During the COVID-19 lockdown last year, people preferred to visit the Thar desert and see the historical and natural attractions in the district rather than go to the far-flung northern areas of the country. This has boosted business opportunities for the local people in the district.
- vii) The recently improved road network and the addition of several government and private rest houses in the area, too, encourage tourism in the district.

B. Monitoring Committee's Viewpoint

42. The expanding roads network and economic activity provide opportunity to develop local attractions for tourism. Looking to the potential of tourism in the region, a lot more can be done through public-private partnership.

43. The district administration in their report has highlighted some measures by the Forest Department such as setting aside grazing fields for livestock and providing saplings for plantation. But the overall performance of the Forest Department staff in the district is far from commendable. For example, most of the saplings have been provided to government officers for plantation at their offices and residences. Not much plantation has been done keeping in view the requirements of the common people.

44. The district has one of the biggest forest areas in the country, but its forests have never been surveyed or demarcated. The Forest Department and the Board of Revenue have been time and again requested to start the survey and demarcation of the forest. But they stubbornly turn a blind eye to this great opportunity to improve the local and provincial economy.

45. Inhabitants of the Thar desert and the district's remote rural areas are highly dependent on their cattle and other livestock, but the Government has bitterly failed to create avenues in this regard for economic activity in the region.

46. The district administration claims that it has taken efforts to prevent people from falling in the traps of the private money lenders. But the Committee has yet to view the details and the data on the actions taken and relief provided. Similarly, the information on the relief afforded to the borrowers in the district through the actions of the State Bank of Pakistan, too, is yet to be received.

C. Actions Required Regarding Miscellaneous Items

47. The following are the Committee's recommendations regarding various miscellaneous items discussed above.

- i) The region has a great potential for tourism and related economic activities. The district administration and the provincial department concerned with tourism should prepare a plan for tourism and related commercial activities in the region. The plan should incorporate strategies to promote the region's unique local handicraft and other trades that will improve the earning capacity of the local people.
- ii) The Government should create a comprehensive policy for livestock to boost economic activity in the area.
- iii) The survey of the forest land in Tharparkar has been inordinately and inexplicably delayed, and any further delay cannot be condoned. The Forest Department, the Board of Revenue and the district administration are required to submit a plan of action delineating concrete actions with timelines within one month.

- iv) The economic uplift in any region depends on the quality of the road network there. In all meetings, the Committee's attention was drawn to the awfully bad condition of many main and link roads such as the Nagarparkar Road and the Chachro-Mubarik Rind Road.
- v) The Secretary Works & Services should ensure that repair work on these roads is expeditiously completed.
- vi) The State Bank needs to intimate the progress on its directives to the financial institutions for restructuring of debt owed by local people in Tharparkar.

VIII. WAY FORWARD

48. One of the difficult challenges until 2018 – brought to the notice of the Committee – had been the low amount of rainfall in Tharparkar, which adversely affected the crop cultivation and livelihood of people in the district. The resulting drought caused the people to migrate to the adjoining districts. But starting in 2019, the average rainfall in the district began to improve, and 2020 turned out to be the wettest in more than a decade. This resulted in a better output of grains and other crops, which substantially improved the availability of fodder for livestock and cash security in the district. A comparison of the annual rainfall trend in the district is given in Table 15.

Table 15 Average Annual Rainfall in Tharparkar

Taluka	Annual Rainfall (in millimeters)						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Mithi	180	422	219	261	58	291	601
Islamkot	167	362	278	337	24	251	346
Diplo	33	512	328	379	51	226	610
Kaloi	Taluka was not created	Taluka was not created	Taluka was not created	114	10	281	354
Chachro	77	363	218	173	105	184	393
Dahli	Taluka was not created	266	128	123	120	129	409
Nagarparkar	43	588	198	324	40	452	472

Reference: As provided by the district administration in its reports for the Monitoring Committee

49. The Government has taken some measures to alleviate the suffering of people of Tharparkar despite various constraints on ground. In the Monitoring Committee's meetings, the district administration officials frequently pointed to the arid wilderness and difficult terrain as the main challenges in management of the district. According to them, because of the vast desert, all development activity in the district costs much more than in other areas.

50. There is no denying that it is a huge district with vast stretches of difficult terrain. But many other countries have fully developed their more intractable regions and some of them fall in the same or lower category as Pakistan in terms of their GDP and per capita incomes.

51. Much of the development work that is feasible depends on the willingness of the individual government departments and agencies to complete the process of approvals in time. But the work also gets delayed because of the failure of the Finance Department to release the budget in time. These delays are especially disconcerting when they happen only because of bureaucratic hurdles – as in most cases the political approvals are already there. If these issues are streamlined in the administrative departments, much of the delay in the completion of development work could be substantially reduced.

52. It is strange that no efforts have been made to adopt information technology in the Government's decision-making processes. The primitive way of getting approvals on note sheet in government offices continues to rule the decision-making in every government department. Perhaps the “note-sheet governance” has been deliberately not supplanted by the modern alternatives. But we often hear of the destruction of files carrying notesheets in “accidental” fires, which also results in obliteration of evidence regarding official wrongdoings. The official record pertaining to decisions taken if processed and stored through the modern means of information technology will make it almost impossible to destroy key government documents and, thus, cause a substantial setback to the curse of corruption in government offices.

53. The problem of interference or maladministration in release of funds to the contractors was often highlighted in the Committee's meetings. The Committee is of the solid view that the less interaction one has with the section officers responsible for releasing the budget, the more transparent and efficient the things will become. While other policy options require longterm interventions and resolute political will, that of using information technology is a handy one. As a start, the Finance Department may be required to come up with a system of automatic release of funds through computerized processes.

54. The Committee is highly concerned about the frequent transfers and postings of government functionaries in the district. There are Supreme Court judgements that put restrictions on transferring government employees without a good and justifiable reason. In case transferring an employee is required, its reasons need to be recorded. But it appears that those judgments have either been fully ignored or implemented half-heartedly. It will be a step-forward toward good

governance, if the Government is strictly required to place all notifications of postings and transfers on the concerned departments websites within 24 hours of their issuance. The failure in doing so should have some unsavory consequences for the concerned authority.

55. Further, the curse of frequent transfers of senior government functionaries on political grounds, especially of the department secretaries, has been impinging badly on the performance and service delivery in every department. This is the one area where if the honorable Supreme Court could be so kind as to issue a restraining order and see to it that it is implemented in letter and spirit. It will not be an exaggeration at all to claim that, if such constraint on the Government is placed, a majority of issues of bad-governance and incompetence would be resolved for good.

56. Another highly concerning problem, which was repeatedly brought to the notice of the Committee is the delays in starting the facilities due to negligence or sluggishness of the Government's engineers responsible for civil work. In this regard, the engineering staff of the Works & Services Department, the PHED and the Education Works wing of SELD constantly come under a bad spotlight. The departments should develop an elaborate system of checks and balances to bridle their engineering staff. The Government should also review if continuing the Education Works wing under the SELD is a good idea and if there are better options keeping in view the changed times.

57. Generally, there is no culture of longterm and realistic planning in the public sector. What the government offices have generally been doing can be likened to continual "firefighting." Whenever an emergency arises, they divert their attention and resources to that area, ignoring other areas. This "unplanned" focus on urgent situations causes excessive wastage of resources. In an ideal situation, every government department – especially Health, Education, Agriculture, Food, and Finance Departments – should have a state-of-the-art research wing manned by experts qualified in research techniques including policy analysis and economic forecasting tools and specializing in the use of advanced research software.

58. The Research Center proposed for forecasting the food situation in the district (please see Section IV) can in due time be made an advanced research and policy center for analyzing the economic situation and livelihoods, and studying social issues pertaining to health, agriculture, education, environment, tourism, and cultural enrichment in the region.

59. The measures recommended in this Report, if implemented, will go a long way in improving the situation in Tharparkar. Further, the measures taken for Tharparkar may serve as a guide or provide a template for the relevant authorities to replicate in other parts of the province. Nonetheless, it cannot be overemphasized that it was the primary job of the concerned government departments and the local administration to have already taken these measures and done more. It would have been great that all the concerned had been doing their job in letter and spirit, so that the honorable Supreme Court did not have to intervene. Irrespective of how and on whose initiative the implementation of these measures starts, the measures will engender a virtuous circle that will lead to an improvement in the livelihood of the people of the area and to the overall economy of the province. In addition, some measures suggested in the concluding paragraphs of this report will help to somewhat improve the state of governance in this province as well. It is important that rigid timelines are specified and a highly transparent, yet strict accountability mechanism is put in place to ensure that the concerned government officials are not able to avoid implementing the measures recommended in this report.

60. In the end, the Monitoring Committee is highly thankful to the honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan for taking the initiative and reposing its trust in it. With the backing of the honorable Supreme Court, this Committee will continue playing its role in improving social services delivery in Tharparkar.

Syed Aijaz Ali Shah
Commissioner, Mirpurkhas Division/
Member, Monitoring Committee

Prof. Dr. Syed Tipu Sultan
Member, Monitoring Committee

Dr. Sono Khanhrani
Member, Monitoring Committee

Mir Ghulam Hussain Talpur
District & Sessions Judge, Tharparkar/
Member, Monitoring Committee

Mr. Riaz Hussain Soomro
Secretary Implementation &
Coordination, SGA&CD/
Convener, Monitoring Committee