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Culture and the post-2015 Development Agenda

As we approach the final stretch of the elaboration of the UN post-2015 Development Agenda, it is encouraging to note that, for the first time, the international community is heading towards the adoption of a comprehensive development strategy that fully recognizes the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development. This recognition builds on the four UN Resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly from 2010 to 2014, and the resolutions of UNESCO’s Governing Bodies, all of which recognize that culture can contribute to elaborating a development model that responds to contemporary concerns, addresses future challenges and promotes transformational change. This recognition is largely the result of UNESCO’s longstanding advocacy for the inclusion of culture in all development policies and strategies.

Culture is who we are. No society can flourish without culture, and no development can be sustainable without it. Through the protection and promotion of the cultural and creative industries, but also the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism, culture is a powerful resource for poverty eradication. According to the World Bank, culture will help meet the ambitious goal to reduce the number of people living on less than US$ 1.25 a day to 3 per cent by 2030. Moreover, cultural and creative industries offer countries the opportunity to diversify, expand and strengthen national economies, thereby contributing to the reduction of social inequalities. However, culture also constitutes a source of wealth in ways that do not have price tags. Culture helps to promote social cohesion and youth engagement and reassert identity. UNESCO is thus committed to safeguarding and protecting cultural heritage, especially in situations of conflict, as it is a catalyst for social cohesion and reconciliation. Educational curricula that take the local context into consideration and include arts education endow citizens with the necessary skills to meet the challenges faced by contemporary societies, thereby contributing to promoting freedom of expression, fostering pluralism and, ultimately, achieving more integrated societies.

Today, more than half of the world’s population lives in an urban environment. It is expected that in 30 years, 70 per cent of humanity will dwell in cities. Culture is key for sustainable cities. Cultural heritage, historic cities and museums represent a strategic resource for local development in a time of rapid urban transformation, since the regeneration of historic centres, the sustainable redevelopment of urban areas and public spaces and the participation of local communities in the protection, management and enjoyment of heritage improve living conditions and the preserve the social fabric. Likewise, culture, and more specifically traditional knowledge and local environmental management practices, can substantially contribute to environmental sustainability and greater ownership by the communities concerned.

We have now reached the last stages of the final drafting of the post-2015 development agenda. In the final draft of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, culture is most clearly integrated within the framework of several goals linked to key issues such as sustainable cities, education, the environment, economic growth and sustainable consumption and production patterns, and food security. Should these references be maintained in the final version, it will be the first time that culture will be integrated in an international development agenda. At a time when decision-makers wish to put people at the centre of sustainable development, this would represent a great step forward for humanity.

Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán
Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO
#Unite4Heritage campaign launched to protect cultural heritage in danger

Since its foundation 70 years ago, UNESCO has worked with the international community to fulfill its mandate to protect our common heritage and cultural diversity primarily through the implementation of its legally binding culture conventions. However, in response to the unprecedented attacks on cultural heritage by extremist groups in recent years, UNESCO has decided to spearhead a series of initiatives specially designed to address this scourge.

One such initiative is the #Unite4Heritage campaign, which was launched by the Director-General of UNESCO in Baghdad in March 2015. It is an online campaign that appeals to young people to stand up for their cultural heritage via a devoted website and social network pages. The campaign aims to build an alternative narrative based on cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue in order to counter extremist, retrograde propaganda.

During the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Bonn, Germany, last June, the Director-General launched the “Global Coalition, Unite for Heritage” to strengthen the mobilization of governments and all heritage stakeholders in the face of deliberate damage to cultural heritage. Moreover, a global strategy to reinforce UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict will be presented to the 38th UNESCO General Conference in fall 2015.

#Unite4Heritage has just wrapped up an extremely successful first four months of celebrating cultural heritage. The level of social media engagement is testament to the passion of people all across the world to stand up to extremist rhetoric and cherish our shared heritage. Since terrorists are becoming more and more present on social media (in particular Twitter), it is important for the guardians of heritage to demonstrate their support online. The #Unite4Heritage website features images of the wonders of the cultural heritage of the Middle East region, such as Egyptian tombs and Syrian temples. Young people are the target audience because they are the most at risk of being recruited by terrorist groups who seek to erase history and all of the trappings of civilization: not just buildings and monuments, but the knowledge, political stability and values acquired over the centuries.

Since its launch in March of this year, the campaign has generated constructive dialogue with the general public. UNESCO has published more than 400 messages and posts on social media, and they have received some 7 million views. Some 23,000 campaign-related tweets have been sent on Twitter, and over 5,200 photos have been posted on Instagram with the campaign hashtag.

Thousands of people have already taken to social media to celebrate the places, objects and cultural traditions that matter to them. The participation of the public in this campaign reflects the fact that heritage is heritage common resource; it is not just the responsibility of States and organizations to preserve it for future generations. The voice of the world’s youth must be heard.

The initiative has also been strongly supported by six UNESCO Field Offices in the Arab region, which are organizing events and training sessions, and working with schools and youth groups to ensure that they are included in the conversation. The campaign hopes to build upon these successes and focus on using cultural heritage to promote tolerance and mutual understanding among peoples all over the world.

Visit the campaign website at: www.unite4heritage.org

Join the conversation online by following #Unite4Heritage on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram.

Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán
Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO
Pakistan is incredibly diverse in terms of local cultures, people, languages, creativity and cultural expressions. Various regions of the country represent a grand fusion of many lifestyles, cultures, art forms and literature. The folk tunes and classical dances, Sufi traditions and local theatre, the fairy tales of the northern areas and legends of the deserts, the rich traditions of art and crafts all represent a kaleidoscope of creative diversity.

For increasingly diverse societies like Pakistan, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. A diverse society that fosters mutual understanding and respect will be more innovative, resilient, and stable.

UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001 which is the first of its kind and promotes the principle that culture takes diverse forms across time and space and as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.

Education plays a critical role in promoting respect and appreciation for diversity of culture and encouraging harmonious living in societies with plural identities. UNESCO Islamabad has taken several steps to promote cultural diversity, peace and social cohesion. Under a regional project, innovative approaches and guidelines were developed to integrate heritage into learning environments and curricula at the secondary school level in four pilot countries: Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Palau. The purpose of the project is to safeguard and transmit to the next generation the knowledge and traditions which developed over centuries through interaction of human beings with their natural and social environment. The project raised interest and respect for heritage, diversity and different world views among students. It was also a great learning experience for teachers to integrate the local content in teaching and learning.

“Since the pilot project conducted in our school, I have started seeing happy students who want to learn and then share with us the stories, songs and special foods of their homes which they ignored previously” said Yasmine Kausar, a teacher at the Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Singhpura.

Vibeke Jensen,
Representative/Director, UNESCO Pakistan
UNESCO’s contributions to Safeguard the Cultural Heritage of Pakistan

UNESCO has been working closely with the government counterparts, NGO’s, educational institutions and other stakeholders to protect and promote both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Pakistan. The purpose of such initiatives is both to safeguard heritage and explore its links with sustainable development, diversity and are sources of pride, peace and harmony. Protection of the diverse features of these sites including building craft, type of architecture and building techniques keep alive the artistic expressions of the diverse people of the past and intangible elements associated with them. UNESCO in cooperation with national authorities has conservation and protection.

Under the international campaign of Safeguarding Moenjodaro, a number of activities were carried out to protect this unique world heritage site against flood threat, high water table and salt action. These activities include construction of 4 spurs and embankment which protected Moenjodaro during heavy floods of 2010 & 11. A number of international and local experts were engaged to carry out studies and training workshops in brick conservation and mitigating the chronic issue of salt action on the site which had been causing the decay of the site at alarming rate.

A number of structures and decorative features have been restored in Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort. Through capacity building of local artisans in decorative features of the sites, the conservation of World Heritage has been linked with livelihoods and poverty reduction. A recent intervention of UNESCO focuses at protecting Taxila World Heritage Site against bio-degradation through capacity building. The intervention aims at establishing a comprehensive baseline of bio-growth and its impact on the site and building the staff capacity through training workshops on mitigating measures and developing conservation guidelines.

Realizing the urgency to protect and promote invaluable cultural heritage of Pakistan, UNESCO in collaboration with Government and other national partners including local Universities, Government Institutions and local NGO’s set off a number of capacity building initiatives on Cultural mapping and disaster affected areas of Pakistan from 2010-11. A number of international and local experts were engaged to carry out studies and training workshops on disaster management, establishing home-based centers and building networks.

UNESCO has been taking initiatives to tap the potential of traditional crafts & cultural and creative industries which can serve as strategic tools for revenue generation, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan, given their rich cultural heritage and substantial labour force. Cultural and creative Industries also carry an aesthetic or symbolic representation which provides access to cultural expressions of diverse groups engaged in activity. UNESCO has been supporting the vulnerable population both male and female in rural areas including disaster affected areas of Pakistan through enhancing their resilience and livelihoods capacity in cultural and creative industries various poverty ridden and disaster affected areas of Pakistan including Swat, Thatta, Bahawalpur, Multan, Mansehra, Pishin and Dera Ghazi Khan. The modalities employed are providing access to training, information of markets, suitable raw-material, establishing home-based centers and building networks.

Highlighting the role of culture in promoting peace, diversity and sustainable development, a number of interventions in the area of heritage education have been initiated, which focus on building the teacher’s and educators capacity to integrate the indigenous knowledge and cultural practices into teaching and learning. The purpose is to safeguard the rich experiences and knowledge which human societies developed over centuries in relation to their natural environment to manage natural resources, cope with disaster & conflict, health and food issues and other aspects of sustainable development.

Vibeke Jensen,
Representative/Director, UNESCO
Pakistan
The Ministry has been actively liaising with the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. Pakistan is party to a number of UNESCO conventions including the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict 1970, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict 1970, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural表现形式 through the implementation of these conventions. One of the recent major steps is establishing the Intangible Cultural Heritage Working Group in cooperation with the Central Asia UNESCO (Cat-II) Centre, Tehran. The Ministry is also collaborating with UNESCO Islamabad on future initiatives for building the capacity of relevant institutions on effective implementation of UNESCO's conventions. One of the recent major steps is establishing the Intangible Cultural Heritage Working Group in collaboration with CRIPAP UNESCO's Category II Institute in China, on capacity building of provincial culture departments and federal institutes dealing with Intangible Cultural Heritage for the implementation of 2003 Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. Pakistan is also an official member of the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the West and Central Asia, UNESCO (Cat-II) Centre, Tehran. The Ministry is also collaborating with UNESCO Islamabad on future initiatives for building the capacity of relevant institutions on policy making in line with international conventions and culture sector needs.

Mashhood Ahmad Mirza,
Joint Secretary (Heritage), Ministry of Information Broadcasting and National Heritage (Heritage Wing)

Pakistan is noted for some of the most varied and beautiful handicrafts of the world including hand-woven woolen material, silver jewelry, woodwork, intricately embroidered fabrics and hand-blocked and tie-dye cottons. The different regions, towns and cities specialize in their own particular handicrafts, which is why there is so much diversity in the crafts of the country. The indigenous skills of Pakistan have evolved over centuries through communal practice and therefore constitute the most authentic representation of Pakistan’s traditional art.

Pakistan is a land of mystics and shrines. Some are ancient and a few of recent origin. Many are specimens of good architecture: of blue tiles, expansive courtyards, wide doors, arches and domes. They show exquisite filigree work, elaborate floral design and delightful calligraphy. Some shrines are made of clay and have no roof or door. But the devotees flock to them in legions. The Sufis have left a mark on the hearts of the people of Pakistan. Even though hundreds of years have passed, Pakistanis believe that they are still living among them and with them. As time passes the number of people visiting the mausoleums grows not less but more. The inner spark of devotion and love keeps on burning.

Pakistan’s traditional musical heritage includes classical music, a system of rags and ragnis and light classical music including thumri, ghazal and qawwali. Pakistan is also extremely rich in folk music and folk dance because of its ethnic diversity. The folk music consists of regional folk dances, folk songs, folk tales, epics, folk romances, children’s songs, lullabies and children’s game songs. Folk song and dance are associated with festive occasions and reflect the social creeds, hopes and aspirations of the people and the intimate picture of happy living and harmony within a community. People belonging to different classes, tribes, trades and occupations have their distinctive treasures of song and dance.

One finds a remarkable continuity of traditions in Pakistan, some of which date back thousands of years to the ancient civilizations of Moenjodaro, Harappa and Gandhara.

Dr. Fouzia Saeed,
Executive Director National Institute Folk & Traditional Heritage
Museums: A microcosm of history culture

Pakistan’s cultural and ethnic diversity makes it one of the most colourful and vibrant places in the world and is cause for celebration. However, due to competing worldviews, monolithic thinking has been dominant in recent times. Since that is imposed, it has not permeated within the nation’s diverse fabric—below the surface and appearing relentless on the surface the beautiful patchwork of diverse cultures is seen everywhere in Pakistan.

Museums serve to bring out the history and culture of a country the way it is authenticity is the beating heart of a museum. It is reflected in the collections and the space becomes a meeting ground for people from all cultures, ethnicities, religious denominations and socio-economic backgrounds to gather in the same place and engage with it without discrimination.

Museums in Pakistan like the Lahore Museum are a microcosm of our history and culture. Hundreds of people from all backgrounds visit the Lahore Museum daily including groups of students—they come to get entertained and to learn about themselves. A survey conducted at the Lahore Museum revealed that people visit the museum for educational purposes and our keen to get in touch with their past as it is reflected in the collections of the museum—the objects speak a language that has unfortunately been stifled at many other places of learning.

Museums have a key role to play in societies like ours where diversity has become a bone of contention rather than cohesion.

Museums in Pakistan are poised to play the role of deepening understanding of our cultural heritage, present circumstances and future directions. Through innovative exhibitions, educational programmes, research and scholarship, they can transform the community’s relationship with art and history and facilitate meaningful dialogue among various communities, who each can find here resonance with their inner core and realise that what binds them is much greater than what divides—together everybody lays claim to an identity which is much richer and authentic than one which is manufactured in silos.

Museums here require encouragement and support, locally and internationally, to document, preserve and interpret their holdings in order to lead the nation into a future that is informed by its past.

UNHCR’s lifesaving initiative

Abdul Wahheed erupted into tears at the sight of his father unable to breathe. He desperately needed oxygen to stay alive. Wahheed’s father managed to survive thanks to a sophisticated centralized oxygen system introduced in Fatimah Jinnah Chest and General Hospital in Quetta, Balochistan. “I got my father back,” Wahheed sighed with gratification. This first-ever centralized oxygen system was initiated and funded by the UN Refugee Agency through the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme. The project was implemented by UNHCR’s partner agency, Society of Collective Interests Orientation (SOCIO). In addition to the installation of a centralized oxygen system, the project includes the provision of other essential equipment as well as the construction and renovation of wards and facilities aimed at ensuring a clean and hygienic environment for patients. Approximately 235,000 patients are benefitting from these improved facilities annually.

Dr. Shireen, head of the Tuberculosis Department at Fatimah Jinnah Chest and General Hospital in Quetta, said that this initiative has made a significant impact and wishes such facilities would be initiated in other public hospitals in the province as well. In addition to the provision of equipment, he said that the renovation of wards gives the patients a sense of contentment. “You can see this ward has a clean look, no smell and no garbage. Patients prefer to come here for treatment,” he said. He added that due to the clean environment, post graduate students now also prefer to come to this hospital for learning.

Head of UNHCR sub-office in Quetta, Dinesh Shrestha, reiterated UNHCR’s commitment to improve access to and quality of basic services for both Afghan refugees and their host communities in the sectors of health, education, water and sanitation across the country.

A refugee uniting a community

Abdul Rehman was four years old when his father died. He was separated from his mother and as years went by, he lost all hope of ever seeing her again. Over a decade later, while living with his foster parents, the then-15-year-old Rehman came to know that somebody knew where his mother was and the two were finally reunited. Rehman’s mother told him that she had cried every day since their separation. “My reunion with my mother was a miracle,” the 46-year-old recalls, his eyes welling up at the memory. During the early 1980s, as a result of intense fighting in Afghanistan, Rehman and his foster parents were forced to flee their home and seek refuge in Pakistan. Rehman’s mother had remarried and the two were once again forced apart. Today, they are finally reunited. Rehman has a family of his own and lives with his mother in Pakistan’s Attock city, after spending seven years in UNHCR’s Swabi refugee camp. Rehman is among the noted elders of the Turkmen community. He is married to a Bangladeshi girl who he discovered had been smuggled into Karachi by her uncle in 1988 from Bangladesh. Having faced the pain of separation himself, Rehman sent his wife back to Bangladesh and reunited her with her parents. Rehman is now working to save future generations from similar fates to those suffered by himself and his wife.

He runs four schools, attended by 1,200 students. “I want my people to get an education so that they can play a positive role in rebuilding Afghanistan,” he said. His own children are among those leading the way. “My children are studying in different colleges,” he said, beaming with pride. “One of my daughters will be the first qualified female physician in the Turkmen community in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Having spent so many years displaced and separated from his mother, Rehman hopes that his efforts will help improve the situation in Afghanistan. “My grandfather was refugee,” he says. I aim a refugee but I don’t want to see the next generation become refugees.”
45 year old Ghulam Sakhi had mixed feelings about going back to Afghanistan after 25 long years of living as a refugee in Pakistan. However, like most refugees who choose to return to Afghanistan, Sakhi is optimistic about the future of his country. His hopes of a brighter future for his homeland outweigh any lingering doubts. “There are still enormous challenges in some parts of Afghanistan but I and my family decided to return because the security situation and livelihood opportunities have improved in Herat,” he said. As a result, Sakhi found himself leading a group of 82 Afghan refugee families who opted to return to Herat under the UN facilitated Group Returns (FGR) programme. Back in Herat, the elders of the group, with assistance from UNHCR, recently purchased land to settle down under the FGR scheme. UNHCR also developed a special package of essential relief items for each family in addition to its regular assistance of US $200 per person cash assistance. So far this year UNHCR has assisted over 51,000 registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan to return to Afghanistan under the agencies largest and longest running voluntary repatriation programme. Dinesh Lal Shrestha, Head of UNHCR in Balochistan, said he hoped that with the formation of the National Unity Government and gradual political stability and better livelihood prospects in some parts of Afghanistan more refugees might opt to voluntarily repatriate to Afghanistan.

Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR’s Representative in Pakistan commended the continuous generosity of Pakistan for extending support to millions of Afghan refugees in the country and highlighted the need for repatriation to be voluntary, in safety and dignity to ensure sustainable reintegration. Additionally, youngsters aged 12 to 30 constitute 44% of the total registered refugee population in Pakistan. She therefore urged all the stakeholders to invest more in the sectors of education and skills training to enable youngsters to play a productive role in the development of Afghanistan once they return to their country.

The Government of Japan has agreed to fund the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to implement a project for the recovery and development of the agricultural sector in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

FATA has been severely affected by unrest and military operations over the last decade. The purpose of the project is to reduce poverty and economic inequalities in two of the agencies (Khyber and Kurram) through restoration and rehabilitation of agriculture production and by strengthening the institutional capacity of government and private agriculture service providers and improving skills of the beneficiaries.

The project is in line with the “FATA Sustainable Return and Rehabilitation Strategy”, launched by FATA Secretariat, which is aimed at supporting the return of displaced families. Currently 218,000 families are awaiting the opportunity to return home which is expected to be realized by the end of 2016.

Mr. Patrick T. Evans, FAO Representative in Pakistan, said that agriculture and its sub-sectors are the primary means of livelihood for the majority of people in the FATA region. Rebuilding agriculture production is therefore critical to ensure food security and to rebuild local economies.

H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Inomata, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan pointed out that the stability of FATA is essential for the stability of the entire Pakistan. He said that the project aims to enhance people’s livelihoods by restoring agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy in FATA, and thereby contribute to the stability of the region. He added that he hopes this project will also promote sustainable return of displaced persons.
Balochistan: Farmers First

Over 130 farmers from Balochistan gathered in Quetta to discuss the constraints and development opportunities of agriculture in Balochistan in a two days conference, “Agriculture Development in Balochistan: Farmers First”. The conference was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the Department of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Government of Balochistan. This is the first time that such large scale farmers’ consultations were held in Balochistan.

While addressing the participants, the Provincial Minister of the Agriculture and Cooperatives, Government of Balochistan, H.E. Sardar Muhammad Aslam Bizenjo said that “To enhance agriculture development and crop productivity in the province, GoB is launching 2015/16 as the Year of Agriculture in Balochistan.”

Chief Minister Balochistan H.E. Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch appreciated the recommendations and suggestions made by the farmers and said “the suggestions will feed into the programme development and implementation for better agriculture in Balochistan.”

While addressing the participants, the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research H.E. Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan announced that the Federal Government will provide agriculture trainings to 1,000 farmers from Balochistan at the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC) in Islamabad. He further said that “the Federal government will work with the provincial government to provide quality wheat seed to the farmers in Balochistan.”

During the conference, the farmers’ representatives also discussed other issues such as long hours of load shedding, water scarcity, agriculture loans, introduction of solar systems for water pumps, agro industries, modern olive and apple plantations, tunnel farming etc.

Addressing the participants, the FAO representative in Pakistan, Mr. Patrick T. Evans said that “FAO is currently implementing two programmes in 14 districts of Balochistan to help increase incomes of resource poor rural men and women.” He also shared that “FAO is supporting the Government of Balochistan in the formulation of the Balochistan Agriculture Policy and Strategy and will also be providing support with the implementation of this policy.”

Improving nutrition in Pakistan

Pakistan network of professionals focusing on harnessing business to address malnutrition met under the banner of the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network (SBN) on 12 August 2015, at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Karachi.

The multi-stakeholder UN-led SUN Movement, founded on the principle that all people have the right to food and appropriate nutrition, has been responding to persistently high levels of malnutrition globally. It supports and encourages private sector businesses to develop and incorporate a combination of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive plans in their business operations. It promotes coordination with a wide range of private sector businesses covering multiple stakeholders. Companies showing interest in having a social footprint under the SBN umbrella are increasing at an unprecedented rate and, by the end of the year, the number is expected to reach 50 across Pakistan from the current 24. Worldwide, SBN has a constituency of 160 companies committed to scaling up nutrition both through global and national platforms.

“Enhancing food and nutrition is an important part of WFP’s mandate” said Lola Castro, WFP Pakistan Representative. “Our efforts capitalize on local capabilities as well as technical expertise and provide locally developed and produced supplementary foods. The private sector is an integral part of promoting nutrition in Pakistan by enhancing local expertise through technology and knowledge transfer. By continuing to work together with the private sector, we can make significant and sustainable progress towards a healthier Pakistan.”
Recent reports of children being sexually abused over a period of several years in the Kasur district of Pakistan are appalling. UNICEF is in contact with the Government authorities to understand the full dimension of this crime. Our sympathies are with the children who have been victims to this abuse. It is vital that the children and families affected are immediately offered the necessary care and protection that will prevent further victimization and allow the difficult process of healing to begin. UNICEF is working closely with the authorities in Pakistan to prevent and respond to such issues affecting children, including sexual violence and abuse. We welcome efforts in Pakistan to tackle the issue of child abuse – including Pakistan signing, along with many other countries, the “We Protect” statement of action to end on-line child sexual exploitation. UNICEF is ready to expand its work with local and national authorities to increase such efforts, so that no child has to suffer these terrible horrors. We hope also that every effort will be made by the Government of Pakistan to bring to justice those responsible for these terrible abuses.

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The UNDP sub-office in Peshawar was established after UNDP Pakistan signed a partnership Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of KP in 2014. It provides an increased institutional presence, representation and coordination of UNDP projects in KP and FATA. The sub-office is also the convening agency for the One UN Programme in KP.

In KP and FATA, UNDP Pakistan focuses on deepening democracy, preventing crisis and building sustainable communities and mitigating and adapting to climate change. UNDP has over 13 projects with operations in KP and FATA, ranging from Chitral in the north and Dera Ismail Khan in the south, to Haripur in the east and Khyber Agency in the west. Some of the major initiatives include working with the FATA Secretariat, to continue to support efforts to assist the return and rehabilitation of displaced communities and strengthening rule of law and promoting peace and justice in KP. This rule of law programme is generously supported with contributions from the Government of KP itself, demonstrating a growing and substantial partnership between the Government of KP and UNDP.

A new regional sub-office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was officially inaugurated in Peshawar. KP and FATA to bring about improvements in the sustainable human development of the region and its people.”

Marc-André Franche stated that, “The establishment of our sub-office in Peshawar reaffirms our commitment to intensify our efforts to work with the Government and people of KP and FATA to bring about improvements in the sustainable human development of the region and its people.”

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65 packages of equipment were provided by UNICEF for the successful roll out of EMIS in all 31 districts of Balochistan. Each package consisted of 4 computers, a scanner printer, camera and other facilities. A comprehensive website has been developed to host the information, which can be used by educational planners, managers, donor organizations, researchers, and the general public.

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Balochistan is a state of education emergency,” said Secretary Education, Saboor Kakar. “If we do not make efforts to resolve the situation, we may end up with a generation that is light years behind the rest of the world.” According to the education department, nearly 60% children of school going age are out of school in Balochistan.

To overcome this problem, the Government of Balochistan is implementing an Education Management Information System (EMIS), which will enhance the institutional capacity for the provision of education with improved planning and monitoring using innovations for data collection. UNICEF, with funding from DFAT Australia, conducted orientation and training workshops for individuals working for data collection, verification and authentication. They used mobile devices to collect comprehensive information about each and every educational facility throughout Balochistan.

This information includes an accurate description of the condition of the schools and any subsequent improvements which may need to be made. The system also maintains profiles of students as well as teaching and non-teaching staff. The most important feature of EMIS is its capability to profile and track every child throughout their educational career.

The system is also able to identify areas where there is a concentration of educational institutions, while children in other areas are deprived of formal education. New schools can be established in the light of these findings, while the money being spent on ghost and defunct institutions can be used to procure necessary equipment for labs and other facilities. A comprehensive website has been developed to host the information, which can be used by educational planners, managers, donor organizations, researchers, and the general public.

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UN WOMEN launches flagship report on gender equality

“Progress of the World’s Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights” is a flagship report launched by UN Women, which unveils a far-reaching alternative policy agenda to transform economies and make gender equality a reality.

The report documents the ways in which current economic and social policies are failing women in rich and poor countries alike. It investigates what this failure means and proposes solutions. The report particularly looks at the ‘invisible’ economy of unpaid care and domestic work that anchors all economies and makes the case that the economies and societies that work for both women and men.

Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan stated that “If the economy really worked for women, women would have equal access to opportunities and resources … we urgently need to build economies that work for both women and men.”

H.E. Ms. Heather Cruden, Canadian High Commissioner in her opening remarks said that “We need to challenge the status quo as it is critical to find solutions to understand and uphold women’s rights and gender equality, which will not only make economies work for women, it will benefit societies as a whole.”

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women stated that “Development and women’s rights are the side of the same coin. We need to work on legislations, policies, ‘growth’ programming and institutional strengthening at every stage and each level.”

The Chief Guest and Honorable Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme, Ms. Marvi Memon, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan said: “We commit to support the findings of UN Women’s flagship report. We also offer our long-term commitment to the progress of the women of Pakistan.”

A holistic insight into this evidence-based report, with the Pakistan country context was presented by UN Women’s Regional Advisor on Women’s Economic Empowerment, Mr. Francisco Cos Montiel, as well as ten key recommendations for actions that governments and others can take in order to move towards an economy that works for women, and benefits all.

progress.unwomen.org/en/2015

Digital Help Desk

A digital safety help desk to assist female journalists dealing with issues of digital security or online harassment has been set up at a local media development organization called Media Matters for Democracy in Islamabad. This was followed by two digital safety workshops that brought together 30 female journalists and bloggers from different print and electronic media organizations. The workshop, Connected and Safe, organized with the support of UNESCO, was aimed at empowering women in the media to enjoy the benefits of technology without feeling vulnerable to digital threats.

Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO representative highlighted the role of female journalists in contributing towards a peaceful, developed and democratic society. She stressed their right to work free from the threat of violence and to ensure the right to freedom of opinion and expression for all.

Commenting upon the decision to set up a help desk, Media Matters for Democracy, Executive Director, Asad Baig said; “We hope to give women in media the confidence to speak out online and use technology in a way that empowers them personally and professionally.”

The training has helped us look at our digital lives in a new way and we feel better equipped to make decisions regarding our digital safety”, said a participant giving feedback on the training.

“I didn’t realize how simple and easy some of the solutions are. This training has helped me understand that a lot of digital threats can be tackled simply by using common sense and being vigilant about our behaviors” said another participant.
A polio-free future

Speaking at the ceremony, the Honorable Minister of State, Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Mrs Saira Atzal Tarar stated that the introduction of IPV is a major landmark to accelerate polio eradication and secure a lasting polio-free world. She stressed that the official launch in Islamabad was only the first of many steps on Pakistan’s road to zero cases. “Real success is getting this vaccine to the communities, families and children who need them. We have to ensure every eligible child takes benefit from IPV” she added.

The vaccine has been successfully introduced into routine immunization schedules in 36 districts in Lahore, Punjab province, alongside the routine immunization schedule. “Adding at least one dose of IPV to the routine immunization schedule is the best possible way to protect your children from life-long polio paralysis, while the disease is being eradicated from the remaining endemic hotspots” said Aziz Memon, Rotary International, speaking on behalf of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

In a statement delivered at the ceremony on behalf of WHO Representative to Pakistan Dr. Michel Thieren it was highlighted that the introduction of a new vaccine into Pakistan’s routine immunization programme was an opportunity to renew training on all facets of the immunization system, including storage, technique, safety, surveillance and micro-planning to reach the most vulnerable children.

Pakistan has made significant progress in the fight against polio with a 75% reduction in the number of cases compared to the same period last year (from 115 cases to 29 cases). However, the country still accounts for more than 80% of cases worldwide so far this year. To address this situation, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif endorsed the National Emergency Action Plan for Polio Eradication, which involves coordinating with provincial and district polio eradication teams to develop targeted national, provincial and priority district operational plans.


Pakistan has taken another step towards a polio-free future by introducing the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) into its routine immunization schedule at a ceremony in Islamabad. The introduction of the IPV will benefit more than 6 million children per year, and will be administered to children alongside other life-saving vaccines.

MEERS-CoV prevention

A two day meeting on Scaling up Preparedness and Awareness Raising for the MERS-CoV Prevention was held in Ramada Hotel Islamabad on August 25-26, 2015. The meeting was organized by the World Health Organization in coordination with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and the National Institute of Health.

In his opening remarks, WHO Country Representative Dr. Michel Thieren highlighted the importance of preparedness and capacity enhancement in dealing with MERS-CoV and similar health issues that can pose a threat to the health of the people of Pakistan. He urged National and Provincial health representatives to develop core capabilities required under International Health Regulations (IHR), and to enhance the skills of departments and officials who are involved in the fight against deadly communicable diseases like Ebola and MERS-CoV. Dr. Thieren urged National and Provincial participants to focus on six pillars of preparedness including Leadership & Coordination, Improved Vigilance at Health Facilities, Enhancing Surveillance and Contact Tracing, Infection Control, Enhanced Laboratory Capacity and Risk Communication for Public Awareness.

Dr. Thieren added that although Pakistan has not reported any case of MERS-CoV yet, due to its regular travel linkages with Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, there are high chances of infection transportation especially on the onset of Hajj season. He praised the efforts of the Government of Pakistan in carrying out implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR) and controlling communicable diseases in Pakistan.

Dr. Malik Muhammad Safi, Director Programs Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, on behalf of the Federal Ministry stated that with the commencement of Hajj season, it is now time to come up with a common risk mitigation plan against MERS-CoV in coordination with other stakeholders including the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Dr. Malik listed the steps that the Federal and Provincial Governments are taking to prepare against diseases such as Ebola and MERS-CoV and thanked WHO Pakistan for their continuous and valuable support to the health ministry.
Strengthening labour inspection systems in Pakistan

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have embarked on a unique partnership aimed at supporting the Government of Pakistan, worker and employer organizations in developing measures to revitalise the country’s labour inspection machinery. During a press briefing on the project, the Netherlands Acting Ambassador to Pakistan, Renate Pors stated, “I am encouraged to see that the Pakistani authorities are conscious about what is at stake for the economy, for employment and for the rights of its citizens. The Netherlands is contributing its share through this programme. And as a friend of Pakistan, we ask the Pakistani government, both federal and provincial, to assume its responsibilities, too.”

The Federal Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, Mr Sikandar Ismail Khan highlighted that “labour inspection is one of the core functions of labour administration system and a key element for enduring the implementation of labour policies, providing feedback and allowing for readjustment of these policies as necessary.” He thanked the ILO and the Government of Netherlands for partnering with the Government of Pakistan on this important initiative.

Speaking at the same event, ILO Country Director, Mr. Francesco d’Ovidio stated that “this project is designed to revitalise labour inspection systems, to enhance its effectiveness, outreach and coverage in line with international labour standards and also responds to GSP Plus which the country put into operation in January 2014.”

Eliminating child labour

During a meeting convened by the Employers Federation of Pakistan on eliminating child labour, participants from Government, workers, employers and economic sectors endorsed the Sialkot Soccer Ball Industry Model as a way forward for other industries to do business in GSP + environment. They also endorsed the adoption of International Labour Standards for enhanced productivity and improved competitiveness in global markets.

Pakistan’s Soccer Ball Industry’s exports crossed US$196 million in 2014. This includes the locally produced Brazuca Ball which featured prominently at the 2014 Brazil World Cup. The resurgence of Pakistan’s soccer football on the international market has been made possible by a proactive approach of the industry to eliminate child labour from its supply chain and the observance of International Labour Standards with the technical assistance of the ILO.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Khawaja Nauman, President of the Employers’ Federation of Pakistan, urged business leaders from various sectors to emulate the success of Soccer Ball Industry in eliminating child labor from its supply chain by respecting International Labour Standards. Mr. Chaudhry Nasim, President of Pakistan Workers’ Federation of Pakistan, urged business leaders from various sectors to emulate the success of Soccer Ball Industry in eliminating child labor from its supply chain by respecting International Labour Standards.

Mr. Raja Ashfaq Sarwar, Minister for Labour and Human Resource Development, Government of Punjab, announced that the Government of Punjab will provide free education, school bags and books to the brick kiln children enrolled in schools under this initiative. Its sustainability will be ensured through strict monitoring and regular follow-up by the District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) which are already functional in all 36 districts of Punjab.

He commended the continued support of the ILO to the Government of Punjab in the elimination of child labour. Mr. Francesco d’Ovidio, Country Director of the ILO, stated that “The initiative of the Chief Minister Punjab is highly appreciated as it will sustain the successful pilot interventions made under ILO’s previous and current projects.” He also highlighted that this was just the beginning and that the government would have to ensure the availability of financial resources for many years to come and develop a solid monitoring system.

Mr. d’Ovidio reiterated ILO’s commitment to support the efforts of the Government, Employers, Workers and other stakeholders in eliminating child labour in Pakistan.

Combating child labour in Punjab’s brick kilns

The first batch of 35 out-of-school children of brick kiln workers from Nankana Sahib District were enrolled in Government Model Primary School Chokhiyanwala, Nankana Sahib under Chief Minister Punjab’s initiative on child labour. This initiative will cover all the brick kilns in Punjab Province.

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Creating decent jobs in Baluchistan

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Director, Mr. Francesco d’Ovidio met with Secretary Labour Baluchistan, Mr. Hamid ul Karim, to reaffirm ILO’s commitment towards the promotion of decent work in Pakistan. A tripartite stakeholder consultation organized by the Department of Labour in Quetta, Baluchistan provided an opportunity to highlight the province of Baluchistan’s specific employment and labour issues.

During his meeting with the Secretary of Labour and Mr. Saeed Ahmed, Director Labour, Mr. d’Ovidio appreciated the commitments made by the provincial government and social partners to improve the welfare of the workers in the province through various actions. He shared ILO’s role towards supporting preparation and planning stages of Baluchistan Development Vision and Strategy. This framework defines the provinces strategy for creating 1.5 million “decent” jobs and reducing the unemployment rate to less than 5%.

Mr. Saeed Ahmed, Director Labour, informed the stakeholders of the technical support that the ILO has provided including the formation of a Decent Work Labour Inspection toolkit, drafting of labour laws as well as programmed support for addressing Child and Bonded Labour in the province.

Mr. d’Ovidio stressed that the people of Baluchistan need to realize the goal of decent work for all and to achieve its development vision. He stated, “It is time to choose the high road to inclusive development in a competitive world – we want to take it with you.”

Entrepreneurship development

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed a pool of 26 national facilitators on ‘Entrepreneurship Development’ using ‘Know-About-Business’ (KAB) training module. These facilitators are from rural areas of Sindh Province and will subsequently instill entrepreneurial and business skills in the youth and farmer communities of Dadu and Mirpurkhas districts.

At the concluding ceremony of a 10-day training course, the Commissioner Karachi, Mr. Shoaib Siddiqui appreciated the training programme and stressed the need for developing employable skills among the youth and promoting decent employment in private sectors. He expressed optimism that the youth if trained properly can create opportunities for themselves. “We have a lot of potential, especially in our girls,” he said.

This training is part of the “Livelihoods Protection and Restoration Project” (LRP). “The purpose of such trainings is to build resilience through livelihood diversification, whereby the on-farm earning of a family is supplemented by the off-farm earning. Resultantly the human security situation in the project areas is improving” said Mr Abid Niaz Khan, National Project Manager LRP.

Speaking at the occasion, Qazi Tanveer, Deputy General Secretary of the Pakistan Workers Federation said that “the need for entrepreneurial and business education for the youth so that they can become self-employed and subsequently an employers for others.

Al Ashraf Naqvi, Joint Director Labour called for inclusion of the occupational health and safety education in the curricula of vocational and entrepreneurial skill programmes.

Mr Khawaja Nauman, President of Employers Federation of Pakistan, emphasized the need for entrepreneurial and business education for the youth to lower the involvement of youth in crime. He pointed out that the involvement of youth in crime can be lowered by providing them with decent employment opportunities. He further said that 40% of the 74 million Pakistanis who are employed abroad are ordinary laborers, thus by investing in skills training we can significantly increase our remittances from overseas Pakistanis.

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The Decent Work Programme

During a press briefing in Peshawar, Mr Francesco d’Ovidio, Country Director ILO, stated that the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) should give priority to a Youth Employment Strategy in order to ensure productive engagement of the youth. During his meeting with the Secretary Labour KP, Mr Kifayatullah Khan, the two discussed matters relating to strengthening labour legislation, improving labour inspection and enhancing employment opportunities for young women and men in KP. Mr Francesco d’Ovidio also apprised the Secretary on the process of developing next ‘Decent Work Programme’ which will identify the prioritized areas for ILO’s technical support in next six years. In another meeting with Secretary Planning & Development Department, Mr Zafar Ali Shah, the ongoing support of ILO on Social Protection was discussed at length and it was agreed that the two institutions would continue working together to put in place a coordinated social protection system in the province. Mr d’Ovidio commended the Government of KP in advancing labour legislation and strengthening labour administration systems in the province. He stressed the need for the province to continue working on the elimination of child and bonded labour and engage young women and men to participate in productive activities.

Government, Employers and Workers representatives greatly appreciated the technical support of ILO in enhancing labour welfare initiatives and especially the personal efforts of the Country Director in such matters. They acknowledged ILOs continued support during unfortunate events including floods, earthquake and the incidence of temporarily displaced persons in the province.

New policies on Afghan refugees in Pakistan and returnees to Afghanistan

Representatives of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of voluntary repatriation, in safety and dignity, to end the protracted stay of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. They reaffirmed a longstanding partnership aimed at creating conditions conducive for sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.

Voluntary Repatriation constitutes part of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), which provides a regional framework for coordinated action to resolve one of the world’s most enduring forced displacement crises. The 26th Tripartite Commission meeting between the two governments focused on aligning the respective new strategies of the two Governments.

The two countries’ draft strategies found significant common ground in their overall approach, mirroring one another in recommendations for improving information-sharing mechanisms, enhancing cross-border collaboration, emphasizing the need for continuing assistance to returnees throughout the reintegration process, and recognizing the importance of gradual, phased return that takes into account conditions in Afghanistan. The Government of Pakistan committed to ensuring that Afghan refugees are protected in Pakistan until they can return home voluntarily and in safety and dignity.

“We welcome the new strategies of the two Governments, which they had committed to jointly develop at the last Tripartite Commission meeting in March 2015,” said the Representative for UNHCR in Afghanistan, Ms. Maya Ameratunga.

The Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Mr. Sayed Hossein Alimi Balkhi, expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Pakistan for continued support and hospitality to refugees still in Pakistan, while emphasizing Afghanistan’s renewed effort for refugees to voluntarily return to their home country.

The Representative for UNHCR in Pakistan, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, underscored the distinction between the Government of Pakistan’s policies for Afghan registered refugees and undocumented Afghans. “The proposal by the Government of Pakistan to consider temporary management arrangements, including the opportunity for registered refugees to voluntarily obtain Afghan travel documents through the Afghan Consulate in Pakistan is potentially an innovative way forward.”
A comprehensive social protection system has been developed for the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in consultation with the Federal and Provincial Government. The system has been piloted in two Districts of KP Province (Peshawar and Nowshera). To streamline this system, a three-day consultative workshop on “How to implement Social Protection Floors” was delivered by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Planning & Development Department of KP. The workshop was co-hosted by the Social Protection Reforms Unit in the Planning and Development Department who have the primary role of mainstreaming social protection work in government programmes.

The workshop reviewed the existing status of social protection in KP Province and identified a clear way forward by looking at reshaping the functions of the social protection system in line with the vision of draft KP Social Protection Policy; the design, institutional set up and organizational structure for Social Protection in KP; defining an implementation plan; and developing human resources and information campaigns for an effective social protection system.

Mr. Francesco d’Ovidio, Country Director, ILO Islamabad highlighted the need for a well-coordinated social protection floor to reach out to vulnerable groups including informal economy workers – who constitute more than 70% of the 59.6 million workforce of the country. He assured ILO’s continued support to the Government of KP Province in advancing social protection and also thanked the Government of Japan for its financial support to the project. The workshop was well attended by more than 40 officials from departments and organizations involved in social protection in KP Province. It was facilitated by two international experts from ILO Geneva including Ms. Valerie Schmitt, Chief Social Policy, Governance and Standards Branch, Social Protection Department and Mr. Thibault Van Langenhove, Social Protection Policy Officer, Governance & Standards Branch, Social Protection Department.

UN Volunteers Pakistan organized a policy formulation consultation on “Volunteerism & Development: Needs of strengthening Volunteer Network and Provincial Volunteer Policy in Punjab” on June 29 in Lahore, Punjab. At the consultation, UN Resident Coordinator for Pakistan, Michael Jones stressed the need for strengthening volunteering activities in Pakistan. He said that policy support from the government is essential for creating a conducive environment for engaging potentials stakeholders in boosting volunteerism efforts. He added that policy support provides substantive guidance and protection which leads to advanced volunteering networks in the country. It also protects the volunteers, who often serve in critical situations like disasters and emergencies.

Mr. Md. Aktar Uddin, Programme Officer, UNV Pakistan and Ms. Lubna Jabeen, Deputy Director NGOs also stressed the lack of policy/legal framework of volunteerism in the country. Legal support from the government mechanism is crucial for strengthening volunteering activities in the country. Ms. Jabeen also laid emphasis on the development of Social Welfare Departments and the effective role they can play in training the youth and providing them a platform to positively utilize their energies.

Punjab Minister for Human Rights and Minority Affairs, Mr. Khalil Tahir said that the government would provide full support in adopting the policy on volunteerism. He endorsed the vision of the UN volunteers and said that volunteering is an investment which bears never ending interests. “I highly appreciate UNV Pakistan for its great efforts towards this policy formulation initiative” he added. The consultation also led to the formation of a Punjab Volunteer Working Group, which would be responsible for forming a Punjab Volunteer Network and drafting a policy on volunteerism under the leadership of Punjab Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal.
Pakistan meets sanitation MDG

Pakistan is one of the 95 countries that have met the Millennium Development Goal for sanitation aimed at halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to basic sanitation, says a recently launched global report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme. According to the report, 64% of the population in Pakistan now has access to sanitation compared to 24% in 1990, a feat achieved by only 95 countries so far. Pakistan is also placed among 77 countries which have met both the drinking water and sanitation MDG. The number of people defecating in the open has been reduced from 46 to 25 million during the last decade. However, closing the gap that exists due to inequities between urban and rural residents in terms of improved access to water and sanitation services, remains a challenge. “This is an incredible achievement,” said Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. “Toilet use is becoming the new norm in rural Pakistan. A country on the road to modernity with unprecedented uptake of toilets, has met the sanitation MDG. I would like to congratulate the Government of Pakistan and its development partners on achieving this all important goal.” It is noteworthy that earlier this year, the second Pakistan Conference on Sanitation was hosted in Islamabad where a large gathering of eminent specialists deliberated on accelerating Pakistan’s move towards achieving the sanitation MDG. Addressing the inaugural session of the conference, the President of Pakistan, Mr. Mamnoon Hussain highlighted that despite strong emphasis on cleanliness in Islam, lack of sanitation facilities is one of the major causes of high child mortality rate in Pakistan. He urged all stakeholders to join hands for universal coverage of sanitation and hygiene in the country.

International Youth Day 2015: volunteerism

UNV Pakistan and Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) organized a youth gathering event on 12 August at PRCS auditorium, Islamabad to mark International Youth Day 2015 under the theme “Youth Civic Engagement”. The event focused on the contribution of youth volunteers and encouraged their civic engagement in Pakistan. It also focused on how the youth can maximize their civic participation with improved skills and knowledge to substantially contribute to national development.

Secretory General PRCS, Dr Rizwan Naseer said that the youth can be tremendously helpful in strengthening communities through volunteerism. A volunteer corps within each community can act as an agent of change and inspire a positive transformation of mindsets, attitudes and behaviors in favor of promoting social inclusion, safe living and a culture of non-violence and peace, he added.

While delivering a speech on youth civic engagement, Md. Aktar Uddin, UNV Programme Officer in Pakistan said that the youth is the key for development in Pakistan as they are dominating 64% of the entire population of this country. He said that we need to create a platform for promoting civic engagement which is crucial for advancing national development. Mr. Aktar also emphasized formulating a policy on volunteerism in Pakistan. Youth mapping is also important for broader participation and retention, he added.

Mr. Gorkhmaz Huseynov, International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Head of Pakistan Delegation, said that efforts are needed to raise awareness about the importance of youth civic engagement and its benefits to the individual and to society, for sustainable development and overall resilience.

Celebrating the role of the youth in building Pakistan’s future

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Young Parliamentarians Forum jointly hosted a conference on Youth Civic Engagement in celebration of International Youth Day, 2015. The conference recognized the vital role young Pakistanis play in building social cohesion and human development. The Country Director of UNDP Pakistan, Marc-André Franche said that “there is a critical need to engage Pakistan’s youth bulge, and strengthen their role in community activities and decision-making. This will only be possible by investing in youth, particularly by increasing their active civic engagement in socio-economic and political affairs. This places immense responsibility in the hands of legislators, policymakers, development practitioners, and other stakeholders. It will be up to them to provide youth with a real chance to become part of Pakistan’s socio-political sphere.” UNDP’s upcoming National Human Development Report on youth aims to provide a strategic direction for appropriate policy-making. By ensuring that the youth have access to quality education, meaningful employment and genuine opportunities for engagement, they can be mobilized to become agents of positive change towards prosperity, peace and human development. Together with the Norwegian government, UNDP is taking an active part in strengthening youth participation. In D.I. Khan District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Youth and Social Cohesion initiative helps involve young people in decision-making and community activities. UNDP has partnered with USAID to provide training and work opportunities to help young people in Karachi’s troubled Lyari, Korang and Sultanaabad areas get involved in the garment industry.

With support from DFID, UNDP raised awareness on voter education especially amongst youth and women. Mr. Franche said: “We want to change the way youth are thought of in the country. Not as a problem to be solved, but as a potential to be realized.”
Youth empowerment

An event was organized by the Women Development Department of Balochistan, in collaboration with UN Women, and the Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group on Women’s Empowerment to commemorate International Youth Day 2015, under the theme “Youth Civic Engagement.”

In his welcome address, Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan stated that “the voice of our youth, if properly harnessed, valued, and recognized, has transformative potential for promoting gender equality towards economic progress, political participation, environmental protection, educational exchange programmes.” Ms. Rahila Durrani, Chief Guest and Member of Provincial Assembly, Balochistan, speaking for the youth of Pakistan said: “The biggest challenge we face is the lack of a youth policy at the provincial level. Parliamentarians must take the initiative in establishing a youth policy below the age of 29 (and 31% between 15-29 years of age). This exceptional ‘youth bulge’ provides an opportunity to invest in and harness the potential of this young generation and lay a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan."

Mr. Afzal Sulehri, Director, Youth Affairs Balochistan, informed “the Provincial Department is working on a youth policy which is expected to be launched very soon in Balochistan. The Department has conducted career counselling sessions in a number of universities across the province and recently 1,250 young men and women have benefitted from international and/or cross-provincial educational exchange programmes.”

Ms. Salma Qureshi, Director, Women Development Department Balochistan, said: “In recognizing youth and the role of youth within the mechanisms of the provincial Gender Equality Frameworks, we will inspire change. Balochistan’s Women Development Department is ensuring the social, economic and political rights of women, by ensuring pro-women laws, legislations and policies work for, and benefit all women across the province.”

Pakistan has the largest cohort of young people in its history. As highlighted in Pakistan’s second National Human Development Report 2015 on Youth almost 64% of Pakistan’s population is below the age of 29 (and 31% between 15-29 years of age). This exceptional “youth bulge” provides an opportunity to invest in and harness the potential of this young generation and lay a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan.

The Department of Balochistan is working on a youth policy for, and benefit all women across the province. By ensuring pro-women laws, legislations and policies work for, and benefit all women across the province.

More than a hundred youth volunteers joined the event from different educational institutions and planted various kinds of saplings. “It is a wonderful activity as I am feeling proud to contribute here for overall environmental protection and sustainable development. "youth bulge” provides an opportunity to invest in and harness the potential of this young generation and lay a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan."

Punjab Forest Department provided around 600 acres of land dedicated to this plantation at Shahdara Reserve Forest, Lahore.

The volunteers planted more than 200 saplings at the reserve and vowed to continue similar efforts in the future to promote awareness about sustainable use of natural resources. Punjab Forest Department organized an exciting “Tree Plantation Drive” on 11th August, 2015 in Lahore, Punjab marking International Youth Day, 2015 together with the Punjab Forest Department, Faces Pakistan and WWF Pakistan. The event focused on raising awareness on environmental issue amongst the youth, encouraging youth civic engagement and consolidating the values of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The tree plantation drive was inaugurated by Peace and Harmony Network Pakistan, Chairman, Pir Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid, Md. Akhtar Uddin, Programme Officer of UNV Pakistan, Justice Jamshed Rehmatullah and Mr. Sharjeel Farooq Malik, Corporate Partnership and Fundraising manager of Worldwide Fund for Nature Pakistan. The speakers stressed that environmental degradation would affect young people more than other demographic group. For this reason, it is important for the youth to be educated about threats to the ecology and encouraged to participate in activities aimed at deliberating responses to ecological challenges. The discussants also emphasized that volunteerism is the key to foster social development. Young people should be provided with forums where they can get together and work for the preservation of the environment.
Goal 4—Education

A collective sigh of relief was heard from the international education community when the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the Open Working Group of the General Assembly in July 2014 included a stand-alone goal on education. The international community has made tremendous progress in making education and learning a reality for millions of children and adolescents. However, the plight of hundreds of millions of children, adolescents and adults who are still being deprived of their right to education for all remains a crucial issue. Partially as a result of backlash attempts to roll back the advances and very real changes in norms and frameworks for realizing women’s human rights, agreed by consensus among Member States during the United Nations conferences (at Vienna, Cairo and Beijing) of the 1990s. Human rights are contentious because, unlike policies and programs, they are often more clearly justiciable, and can be used to hold Governments and others to account for their acts of commission or omission. The backlash against women’s human rights has been led by Member (and observer) States of the United Nations with poor records on discrimination against women, as well as laws, policies and practices that sustain gender inequality across a wide spectrum of issues. The refusal by other Member States to recognize that economic, social and cultural rights are interlinked and inseparable from civil and political rights is also a serious challenge to advancing towards the fulfillment of SDG 5.

Goal 5—Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls: Is SDG 5 missing something?

It is undoubtedly true that compared to the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals have been a more open and inclusive process driven by United Nations Member States, generating widespread debate. And yet, when it comes to gender justice, the goals sound eerily similar. There is a worrying limitation to SDG 5, which is the absence of a clear recognition of the human rights of women and girls. The fact that the human rights of girls and women should be contentious 15 years after the Millennium Declaration, and 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, is a product of backlash. This backlash attempts to roll back the advances and very real changes in norms and frameworks for realizing women’s human rights, agreed by consensus among Member States during the United Nations conferences (at Vienna, Cairo and Beijing) of the 1990s. Human rights are contentious because, unlike policies and programmes, they are often more clearly justiciable, and can be used to hold Governments and others to account for their acts of commission or omission. The backlash against women’s human rights has been led by Member (and observer) States of the United Nations with poor records on discrimination against women, as well as laws, policies and practices that sustain gender inequality across a wide spectrum of issues. The refusal by other Member States to recognize that economic, social and cultural rights are interlinked and inseparable from civil and political rights is also a serious challenge to advancing towards the fulfillment of SDG 5.

Goal 6—Global access to clean and safe water

Sustainable Development Goal 6, as formulated by the United Nations Open Working Group, presents an ambitious, yet achievable mission for the next two decades: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” This goal can be achieved by applying the following principles: separating drinking water from wastewater, accessing and treating drinking water to remove chemical and biological contaminants, protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems and guaranteeing water access and water rights.

Tremendous progress has already been made towards meeting SDG 6. As nations have become more prosperous, they have undertaken sanitation and drinking water improvement programmes. Nevertheless, the astonishing statistics regarding the number of people who still lack sanitation and access to safe drinking water emphasizes that this problem remains one of the greatest humanitarian challenges. Leadership and education about the benefits of hygiene and sanitation are an essential prerequisite for water quality improvement. The responsibility of developed nations is not just to provide financial aid, but also to assist developing countries in building human capital with the skills necessary to improve water quality and sanitation. Developed nations can help research and advance new water treatment technologies, providing sustainable solutions for water management. Investment of time and resources to the development of low-cost, robust and reliable point-of-use devices is urgently needed.

Water reform needs to address the challenges of funding SDG 5 will remain as a major stumbling block unless it becomes central to its means of implementation.

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Water reform needs to address the challenges of funding SDG 5 will remain as a major stumbling block unless it becomes central to its means of implementation.
Happy 70th anniversary, United Nations!

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations provides an unprecedented opportunity to enhance outreach to the Pakistani youth while involving them in a number of educational projects. On the occasion of UN70, the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Pakistan, is holding a series of events and activities to promote the values of the United Nations and its partners among the general public, with a special focus on youth. The festival will be held from 10-18 October, 2015 in Islamabad and will be staged in several locations including Lok Virsa, PNCA, ILO auditorium and partners’ sites.

The festival will highlight the achievements and challenges of the development and humanitarian scenario in Pakistan and the crucial role of the United Nations and its partners among the general public, with a special focus on youth. The festival will be held from 10-18 October, 2015 in Islamabad and will be staged in several locations including Lok Virsa, PNCA, ILO auditorium and partners’ sites.

Additionally, a global UN campaign called “Turn the World UN Blue Campaign” is planned to light important monuments, buildings, bridges, landscapes, and other iconic landmarks in Pakistan and around the world in blue to mark the 70th anniversary.

To further commemorate this special occasion, UNIC has two initiatives in the pipeline aimed at empowering the youth and actively engaging them in the promotion of information about the UN. First, is the UN Wall campaign, which includes promoting key messages of the United Nations and creatively displaying them on a dedicated wall in schools and universities across Pakistan. Secondly, the UN Corner campaign involves providing Pakistani university students with access to key literature and publications released by the UN.

Happy 70th birthday, United Nations!

Involving young people: the UN Wall campaign

The United Nations Information Centre is committed to empowering the Pakistani youth for the promotion of peace and harmony in the country. In the past couple of years, Pakistani young people have been increasingly involved in various projects to provide them with the opportunity to learn about the United Nations system and its contribution to the development of Pakistan and the world.

The UN Wall Campaign is one such initiative of United Nations Pakistan on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. The purpose of the UN Wall Campaign is to promote key messages and values of the United Nations in Pakistan. Students are asked to creatively display these messages on a dedicated wall in their schools and universities. The messages, available in both English and Urdu, focus on education, gender equity, hunger, climate change, health, peace and tolerance, volunteerism and other priority areas of the United Nations in Pakistan.

Students’ creativity is central to the making of the UN Wall. It allows them to showcase a positive image of their country through their active engagement and also gives them a chance to play a part in the 70th founding anniversary celebrations of the United Nations.

Leena Nishtar, UNIC

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Happy 70th anniversary, United Nations!
Karin Hulshof, Regional Director, UNICEF visits Pakistan A way forward for children

On Friday, 31 July 2015, UNICEF hosted ‘Reflection & Way Forward’ – an exhibition and event to reflect on what has been achieved for children in Pakistan as it marked the halfway point in UNICEF’s 2013 – 2017 Country Programme.

The UNICEF Country Programme is an integral part of the ‘One UN Programme’ in Pakistan. UNICEF is prioritizing six key areas in its current country programme to make a real difference to the lives of children in Pakistan. These key areas include education, decreasing child deaths and birth registration. The event was attended by donors, government partners and representatives of the United Nations’ agencies working in Pakistan. Speaking at the event UNICEF Regional director for South Asia Karin Hulshof praised the resilience and ‘spirit’ of Pakistani women and men in their quest to overcome the problems they face on a day-to-day basis. She also appreciated the country for the progress it has made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thanked UNICEF for its contribution towards improving the lives of the children of Pakistan.

Other guests included Her Excellency Heather Cruden, High Commissioner of Canada in Pakistan, Prime Minister’s Focal Person on Polio Senator Ayehsa Raaz Farooq and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Task Force on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Marriyum Aurangzeb. They also remarked on the progress made by the country in achieving its goals regarding the key priority areas and applauded UNICEF for its efforts to promote decent work and progressively eliminate child labour in its value chain.

On this thematic area in line with the UNCT of Pakistan on 13 August on ILO’s interventions on Social Protection Floors from 10 to 12 August, Ms. Schmitt also briefed the UNCT of Pakistan on 13 August on ILO’s interventions on Social Protection Floors from 10 to 12 August. During her visit she facilitated a three day consultative workshop on ‘How to Implement Social Protection Floors’ and sought opportunities to collaborate with other UN Agencies on this thematic area in line with the Social Protection Floor initiative endorsed by the UN’s Chief Executive Board.

Finally, Ms. Eva Majurin, Enterprise Engagement Unit, ILO visited Pakistan from 23 to 27 August, to conduct an awareness raising seminar on the Multi National Enterprise Declaration in collaboration with Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP). The principles laid down in this universal instrument offer guidelines to MNEs, governments, and employers’ and workers’ organizations in such areas as employment, training, conditions of work and life, and industrial relations. The mission supported EFP’s efforts to promote more and better jobs in the sports goods industry in Sialkot.

International missions to ILO, Islamabad

International missions to the International Labour Organization Country Office in Islamabad included the following.

On 22 August, 2015 to conduct consultations and meet stakeholders to explore ways of expanding the micro-insurance market in Pakistan. Facility will follow-up on ILO’s involvement in National Financial Inclusion Programme, Heart of Asia Initiative, and the roll-out activities under the National Disaster Management Fund.

Mr. Simon Steyne, Head of Partnerships, Social Partner Engagement and Advocacy ILO-IPEC/FPRW Geneva, visited Pakistan from 18 to 22 August, 2015 to conduct consultations with various stakeholders including Bulleh Shah Packaging (BSP), Workers and Employers Organizations to develop a public-private partnership project between the ILO and Stora Enso, a leading global provider of renewable solutions in paper, packaging, wood and biomaterials. The project will strengthen Stora Enso’s global policy and efforts to promote decent work and progressively eliminate child labour in its value chain.

On 10 to 13 August, Ms. Schmitt also briefed the ILO’s Impact Insurance Facility, ILO’s Social Finance Department, ILO’s Enterprise Declaration in collaboration with Employers’ Organisations to develop a public-private partnership project between the ILO and Stora Enso, a leading global provider of renewable solutions in paper, packaging, wood and biomaterials. The project will strengthen Stora Enso’s global policy and efforts to promote decent work and progressively eliminate child labour in its value chain.

On Tuesday, 21 July 2015, Ms. Valerie Schmitt, Chief, Social Policy, Governance and Standards Branch Social Protection Department of the ILO, visited Pakistan from 10 to 13 August. During her visit she facilitated a three day consultative workshop on ‘How to Implement Social Protection Floors’ and sought opportunities to collaborate with other UN Agencies on this thematic area in line with the Social Protection Floor initiative endorsed by the UN’s Chief Executive Board.

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Advocating for climate change and COP21

A famous morning show, ‘World this morning’ anchored by Maha Makhdum was broadcast on PTV world to mark the 1st World Youth Skills Day on 15 July, 2015. The United Nations Information Centre Director, Vittorio Cammarota along with Programme coordinator for the UN Wall campaign, Ahsan Ausaf participated in the programme. They shared details about the campaign, which is specifically designed for the Pakistani youth on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations this year. The purpose of the UN Wall campaign is to promote key messages and values of the United Nations in Pakistan. Students will be asked to creatively display these messages on a dedicated wall in their schools and universities. The messages, available in both English and Urdu, focus on education, gender equity, hunger, climate change, health, peace and tolerance, voluntarism and other priority areas of the United Nations in Pakistan.

Mr. Cammarota encouraged the youth to focus on their skill development by participating in the UN Wall campaign, which will not only provide a great learning opportunity about UN’s core values and messages through creativity and art but also allow the youth to showcase a positive image of their country.

9 July 2015: UNIC organized a special talk show with Radio Pakistan to raise awareness among the general public on climate change and COP21. H.E. Cyrill Nunn, Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, Ambassador Shahid Kamal, Advisor, Centre for Climate Research & Development (CCRD), Vittorio Cammarota, Director, UNIC and also joined via call Nick Nuttall, Coordinator Communication and Outreach of the UNFCCC, based in Paris participated in the programme and talked about the SG’s proposals, which he recently shared with the General Assembly at the high-level event on climate change. The speakers also shared their thoughts about the agenda, participation of multiple stakeholders from across the globe and expectations towards the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21), where hundreds of world leaders and experts on climate change shall be gathering in November, this year.

World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Around the world, criminals are selling people for profit. Vulnerable women and girls form the majority of human trafficking victims, including those driven into degrading sexual exploitation. I call on all countries to sign and ratify the UN Conventions against corruption and transnational organized crime, including the latter’s human trafficking protocol. I applaud the donors who have enabled the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons Fund to assist thousands of people. Every country must join together to overcome this transnational threat by supporting and protecting victims while pursuing and prosecuting the criminals.

On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, let us resolve to act as one in the name of justice and dignity for all.

International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples focuses on the health and well-being of the world’s indigenous peoples. We must make every effort to support indigenous peoples’ rights and aspirations as affirmed in the Declaration. On this International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples, I call on the international community to ensure that they are not left behind. To create a better, more equitable future, let us commit to do more to improve the health and well-being of indigenous peoples.
International Day of Youth

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Charter and the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In support of their aims, my Youth Envoy is helping to mobilize this largest generation of young people in history. In this landmark year, as leaders prepare to adopt a bold new vision for sustainable development, the engagement of youth is more valuable than ever. At this critical moment in history, I call on young people to demand and foster the dramatic progress so urgently needed in our world. I applaud the millions of young people who are protesting for rights and participation, addressing staggering levels of youth unemployment, raising their voices against injustice, and advocating global action for people and the planet. Let us all support young people in creating a future where our planet is protected and all people live in dignity!

World Humanitarian Day

On this World Humanitarian Day, I urge everyone to show solidarity as global citizens by signing up to the #ShareHumanity campaign. By donating your social media feeds for just one day you can promote humanitarian action and help to give a voice to the voiceless by sharing their stories of crisis, hope and resilience. I count on the support of all sectors of society to make the World Humanitarian Summit a success. The Summit, scheduled to take place next May, will provide a platform for new partnerships and initiatives that will vastly reduce suffering. Together we can and must build a more humane world with a stronger commitment to life-saving humanitarian action!

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Victims of enforced disappearances are deprived of their liberty, kept in secret detention and seldom released. Often their fate remains unknown; they are frequently tortured and in constant fear of being killed. Even if they are eventually set free, the physical and psychological scars stay with them for the rest of their lives. The victims’ families and loved ones also suffer immense anguish. On this International Day, I urge all Member States to ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance without delay, and I call on the States parties to implement it. It is time for an end to all enforced disappearances!

International Day against Nuclear Tests

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the dawn of the nuclear age. The best way to honor the victims of past nuclear tests is to prevent any in the future. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is essential for the elimination of nuclear weapons. On this International Day, I repeat my longstanding call on all remaining States to sign and ratify the Treaty—especially the eight necessary for its entry-into-force—as a critical step on the road to a nuclear-weapon-free world!
We the People

Cambodia
01 August 1992

Human Settlements
The place where people live and work

The Territory of West New Guinea
01 October 1962

Population Explosion
The concern of all Nations
01 July 1982

Campaign Against Drug Abuse
01 October 1986
We the People

Street Children in Brazil
01 January 1986

Mogiana Agricultural Diversification Scheme
01 April 1970

Training of Teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Lybia
Tripoli, 01 December 1971

Mongolian Herders Practice Sustainable Resources Management
28 July 2009

Kindergarten Child in Myanmar
13 June 2011
We the People

Northern Mali
27 July 2013

Eid Al-Fitr Celebrations in Somalia
06 August 2013

Making of Aluminium Cooking Pots at Cité Soleil, Mali
03 October 2013

Dijgareyber Mosquee, Timbuktu
09 December 2013
We the People

Field Coverage, Cambodia
04 March 1993
The United Nations has a long-standing partnership with the people of Pakistan in support of national development goals. The United Nations has also been providing humanitarian assistance in case of natural disasters and crises. Led by the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations works in all eight administrative areas of Pakistan through 19 resident organizations. Straddling humanitarian assistance and sustainable development, the work of the United Nations in Pakistan includes key areas such as education, health, water & sanitation, nutrition, economic growth, employment and livelihoods, resilience against disaster, governance, gender equality and social justice.

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United Nations in Pakistan

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The One UN Programme for Pakistan, United Nations focuses on accelerating progress towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals, reducing poverty, promoting opportunities for youth as well as advancing gender equality and human rights both at national and sub-national levels.

United Nations encourages economic growth in Pakistan through supporting policies and programmes that link small farmers to markets, improving working conditions for women and supporting home-based and domestic workers. It will also assist the Government in strengthening democratic processes and institutions at the federal, provincial and local levels. Tackling the effects of climate change and reducing Pakistan’s vulnerabilities to natural disasters features especially prominently in the work of the United Nations in Pakistan in 2014.