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It is projected that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events will increase in the future making disaster risk management and long-term adaptation planning extremely important. The numbers of people who need humanitarian assistance as a result of extreme weather patterns, and the cost of helping them, are skyrocketing. We need to shift our focus to prevention, preparedness and helping communities at risk better adapt to the vagaries of climate.

The tragic floods that we again witnessed in Pakistan this year, affecting some 2.5 million people, are testimony to how vulnerable Pakistan is to natural disasters. The factors behind extreme weather events such as the floods in Pakistan are often complex and interconnected. Shifting monsoon patterns, depletion of forests leading to soil erosion and silting of dams and rivers, insufficient flood management structures, combined with growing population living in the flood plains, are all factors.

The human and economic cost of annual floods in Pakistan is enormous. It is imperative that we better understand and address these factors, but importantly we must ensure that vulnerable communities in Pakistan and elsewhere are supported so that they can better adapt to the increasing variability in climate. One of the six Strategic Priority Areas for the work of the United Nations system in Pakistan is to help increase national resilience to disasters. UN agencies and their government counterparts work closely together to strengthen the capacities of key institutions and communities for greater resilience and to improve safeguards to development gains. To stimulate discussion on this crucially important topic, the COMSATS Centre for Climate Research & Development and the United Nations have joined hands to hold the Climate Summit. It is an opportune time to bring bold announcements and actions that will reduce emissions, strengthen climate resilience, and mobilize political will.

Timo Pakkala
UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan
Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge of the twenty-first century and no nation can afford to ignore its global impact. Pakistan is a country that has been classified as highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Extreme rainfall, shifting rain patterns, floods, melting of glaciers, droughts and increase in temperatures are reflective of the challenges Pakistan is facing. Given the risks and vulnerabilities posed by climate change, Pakistan has to mobilize its talents and energies to address these challenges. In this context we have to develop our research capacity and establish knowledge networks within the country as well as internationally. Recognizing the importance of climate change, the Rector of COMSATS Institute of Information Technology Dr. S. M. Junaid Zaidi extended valuable support in the setting up of The Centre for Climate Research and Development (CCRD) in Islamabad. CCRD will emerge as a vibrant research entity in climate research with a broad mix of indigenous knowledge, skills and scientific talent geared towards responding to the challenges confronting Pakistan from global climate change. The Global Climate Summit in New York last month was a timely event in raising awareness of the significance of the threats emanating from the changing global climate system. Hence building climate resilience is essential for promoting economic growth and development of the country. Time has come for us to act on the risks posed by climate change, recognize our shared humanity and common challenge and build a sustainable future.

Ambassador Shahid Kamal
Advisor COMSATS Centre for Climate Research and Development (CCRD)
This year during the month of September, one of the biggest Climate Summits was held at UN HQ in New York with more than 100 world leaders participating. New commitments, promising ideas and ways of financing were to be made by those participating. Unfortunately, Pakistan did not have much to offer. Despite being considered as one of the most vulnerable countries to be affected by the perils of climate change, it came with the same sob story of lack of funding, but who is to be held accountable? Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif requested the international community to intensify its efforts to move from awareness to commitments on climate change and that Pakistan required US$ 5 billion annually to fight climate change impacts. Due to the lax attitude and capacity of the government, Pakistan has witnessed a setback in participation at international platforms. Very recently it also managed to fail to benefit from international climate financing which was available, largely because of its lack of capacity to develop projects. At the moment, Pakistan is the recipient of US$ 3 million for climate adaptation fund from the international community, which experts believe is nominal bearing the need in mind. Climate experts are now trying to convince policymakers to shed light on climate as a subject that needs immediate attention. There is speculation the Prime Minister will expand his cabinet and appoint a dedicated full-time minister on climate change. But instead of just focusing on the management of disasters, they need to invest resources to revamp climate policy and develop a well-thought out forecasted strategy that combats the climate change challenges of the region.

Maha Mussadaq
The writer is a correspondent for The Express Tribune Newspaper in Islamabad, Pakistan. Recently was selected for 2014 Fellow of United Nations Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme.
Climate Summit Pakistan: experts call for concrete actions to mitigate the effects of climate change in the country

On the eve of the Climate Summit organized by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York, experts gathered in Islamabad for the Climate Summit Pakistan, organized by the COMSATS Centre for Climate Research & Development (CCRD) and the United Nations. Experts from academia, international organizations, government and civil society discussed Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change and some of its extreme manifestations like floods and droughts. They said that investments in water conservation, renewable energy, agriculture, water storage and reforestation are vital to sustainable development. A group of students aged 8-13 years shared their proposals for an environmental-friendly way of living. Zoha, a 12 year student said: “Increasing the use of bicycles and planting trees outside our homes are small steps that can lead to a healthier lifestyle”. Pakistan is a signatory to major environmental conventions and protocols and the United Nations supports the government through several projects that will hopefully lead to strengthen Pakistan’s role in the global climate change movement.
In the run up to the Climate Summit, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations organized a live webcast briefing session on the topic. The United Nations Information Centre Islamabad invited journalists and representatives of Member States to participate in the briefing session. Rob Duijs, Senior Advisor Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Pakistan, Shahid Kamal, Adviser, COMSATS Centre for Climate Research & Development (CCCRD) and Vittorio Cammarota, Director UN Information Centre gave an introduction of the summit and briefed the participants about several initiatives for raising awareness on the issues related to climate change.

Daniel Thomas, Senior Public Information Officer, Climate Change Team of the Secretary-General and Daniel Shepard, DPI Climate Change Focal Point joined the briefing via video conference from the UN Headquarters in New York: in addition to sharing key information on the summit they answered questions from the participants. Media representatives from Dunya Daily newspaper, Dawn News, Express Tribune, Daily Kashmir Express and some independent journalists attended the briefing. They exchanged views with the UN experts on the impact of climate change on south Asian developing countries. The briefing was also attended by the press attachés and representatives from the Agence Française de Développement, the Embassy of France, the Canadian High Commision in Islamabad and researchers from COMSATS university in Islamabad.
Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, although it has done little to contribute to the problem. The recent floods provide us an opportunity to build climate resilient infrastructure and mitigate the effects to reduce threats. In partnership with the Government of Pakistan, UNDP supports efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable are better able to manage, adapt to and monitor climate change. Climate change adaptation and mitigation improves community-based management of natural resources in vulnerable environments, including the sustainable management of threatened ecosystems. Our work towards mitigation and adaptation strengthens community resilience.

Marc-André Franche, Country Director, UNDP

Pakistan is currently facing a severe energy crisis, which is impacting not only on the economy but every aspect of life. Energy production through conventional means like furnace oil and coal-based power plants is not meeting the energy demands while also contributing to climate change. Furthermore, the growing population demands sustainable ways to address this energy crisis that can also help strengthen the economic sector. As part of thematic priorities on energy and the environment, UNIDO promotes the enhanced use of renewable energy sources such as biomass utilization for power generation, improved industrial energy efficiency and the promotion of cleaner technologies.

Esam Alqararah, Representative, UNIDO Pakistan
Climate change is a phenomenon that is impacting countries around the globe and Pakistan is no exception. The National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan estimates that the cost of adaptation to climate change will be more than 10% of the GDP over the next 40 years; ranging from USD 13-14 per capita. The Climate Change Division and UN-Habitat initiated the pilot Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment in Islamabad. The report, based on objective assessments, highlights projects that city authorities can mainstream in their planning for making Islamabad “climate resilient” and recommendations for utilizing present institutional arrangements for a well-coordinated effective implementation of the suggested plans.

Bella Evidente, Representative, UNIDO Pakistan

The COMSATS Centre for Climate Research & Development (CCRD) and the United Nations Pakistan held a Climate Summit in Islamabad in the run-up to the Global Climate Change Summit hosted by the UN Secretary General on 23 September in New York. Climate change will impact the livelihoods of the already vulnerable and food insecure people. We must all focus on mitigation measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases as well as adapting our food production systems to a warmer world of changing climatic patterns and more extreme climatic events.

Patrick T. Evans, Representative, FAO Pakistan
When we talk about climate change, the first thing that comes to our mind is global warming. We deliberately think that only global warming is responsible for floods and other natural disasters. But there are two kinds of climate change: natural and artificial or man-made climate change. Many people focus on their own personal interests and lack in social thinking and do not care for the environment. Since electronic media has replaced the minds of our generation, we have become insipid. We are relentlessly building industries, increasing nuclear toxic waste and destroying forests and natural habitats on a massive scale.

Ahmed Hassan  |  Class: O-levels (XI)  |  School: Army Public School, Rawalpindi

Climate change represents one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats faced by the planet. It's now evident from the observation of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of arctic ice and rising sea levels. The average terrestrial temperature has risen by 0.67 degrees Celsius. Even the lower end of this range would take the temperature increase since pre-industrial times to 2 degrees Celsius. This directly affects life on earth. It may lead to extreme heatwaves. It's a threshold beyond which catastrophic changes become very likely.

Arham Arshad  |  Class: O-levels  |  School: Army Public School

Humans are modifying the world and not always for the better. To help the environment we must use electricity to a minimum to prevent greenhouse gases entering into the atmosphere. The exhaust from engines contributes to greenhouse gases that deplete the ozone layer so walking whenever possible and carpooling or riding a bicycle is advised. Planting trees makes the environment healthy and should be encouraged. Trees have endless benefits. People should look for the recycle logo on cans, bottles etc. This helps save energy and natural resources that go into making them.

Fareed Ullah  |  Class: 8th Grade  |  School: Islamabad Model College for Boys – F-7/3

Deforestation alters the environment. The exclusion of trees has a great influence on the water vapour content of the atmosphere and has a negative impact on cloud formation and hence rainfall. The gaseous exhaust from vehicles and factories can harm people by leading to an increase in the percentage of respiratory illnesses. People have also formed a habit of dumping domestic waste into water. This effects marine life and causes pollution. The use of natural resources, energy saving and reforestation must be undertaken. Materials like paper, glass, plastic and metal must be efficiently recycled.

Nagina Kousar  |  Age: 16  |  School: FG Girls College, Tarlai.

In the past, our planet was covered in thick forests that have fallen victim to deforestation for urbanization. Short term benefits and economic goals can be achieved. However, it is leading us into long term loss. Pakistan is one example of a country where forests were 20-30% of total land but only 12% remains today. Forests prevent soil erosion, floods, produce oxygen and are a primary source of energy conversion. Urgent measures must be taken to encourage reforestation, encourage proper dumping of waste to prevent harmful substances from entering the environment and awareness campaigns on climate change.

Syed Ahmed Ali  |  Class: AS Level  |  School: Army Public School, Rawalpindi
UNICEF helps marginalized girls attend school and develop life skills through sport and play

“I stopped going to school as the teachers used to punish children physically,” says 12 year old Sana Zahid, now enrolled at Girls Primary School in Sindh. “My parents heard about the GPS Sheikh Maula School with friendly teachers and got me admitted here. I love my new school.”

Sindh is the second largest Province of Pakistan. There are 6.4 million children in the 5-9 year age group, and 59% of these children are out of school. Almost 40% children enrolled in public schools eventually drop out. Poor teaching quality, corporal punishment, socio-economic factors and community disengagement with schools contribute to dropouts and low enrolment rates.
In 2011, with financial support from the UK National Committee, UNICEF initiated the ‘Strengthening Child Friendly Schools and Communities: Life Skill Development through Sport and Play among Children’ project in Sindh Province. Female coaches for sport and play were identified and trained to deliver life skills to children through interactive and sport-based activities.

Regular play-based activities have made schools a fun place for children. Enrolment and regular attendance in partner schools have increased while the drop-out rate has decreased. Reflective learning methodologies have motivated children to participate in classroom activities. With enhanced basic life skills, children now demonstrate better self-esteem, confidence, communication, respect, cooperation and team work.

“Play and sports are an integral part of children’s holistic growth and learning and has shown us how making education ‘fun’ can actually accelerate the learning process and contribute in the cognitive development of children” says Shahla Rashid ud Din, Education Specialist, UNICEF.
The Twinning Programme is a partnership between the Government of Pakistan, World Food Programme and the international donor community through which wheat donated by the Pakistani Government is transformed into fortified wheat flour and distributed in the most vulnerable communities.

This project also implements the aid and food assistance reform agendas such as Accra Agenda for Action where the donor community, including the United States, pledges to support host government initiatives and utilize local systems as much as possible. Locally grown wheat are milled, fortified and packaged in Pakistan to feed Pakistani people affected by natural and other disasters. To assist the displaced people from the northern regions of the country to meet their nutrition requirements USG, United Nations World Food Programme and the Government of Pakistan have collaborated and are distributing wheat flour to the Internally Displaced People. This twinning of efforts also stimulates local economic growth, because all the wheat used is procured and processed locally, thus extending the benefits of this activity to Pakistani farmers, mills and to other commercial entities, such as bag producers and local transporters.

Partnering with the Government of Pakistan, WFP and other donors, as demonstrated by this activity has tremendous potential to extend the reach of humanitarian assistance and provides an excellent opportunity for “win-win” cooperation. Twinning of efforts is a very effective tool used by the Government of Pakistan and donors to address the nutrition needs of Pakistanis affected by disasters.
Many IDPs have to visit food hubs in order to get their monthly food rations. A lot of them can face issues due to lack of information and guidance on how to access the food rations. It was on 18 May, 2014 that the Humanitarian Call Centre received a phone call from Khan Wazir, whose food ration access had been blocked for the past six months. The case was immediately referred to the HComms Field Team. Khan Wazir was one of the many IDPs from Tirah who worked as a laborer and his only source of income was his minimal daily wage and the food package he received from the WFP Food Distribution Point at Jerma, Kohat. When his food package got blocked, food insecurity, coupled with fatigue and frustration, brought Khan Wazir and his family close to breaking point.

One day, Khan Wazir heard a radio announcement about the HComms Humanitarian Call Center and he got in touch. Khan Wazir’s issue was dealt with by the HComms Field Team in the most effective and efficient manner. The case was immediately referred to the Norwegian Refugee Council and a complaint was lodged. A few days later a jubilant Khan Wazir could not believe that he was actually able to collect his food ration again after a grueling delay of almost six months. The story of Khan Wazir is just one case that shows the team work and co-ordination of the HComms team to provide assistance those in need.
FAO, USAID showcase the Balochistan Agricultural Project at a world’s premier horticulture event

For the first time ever, the US-AID-funded FAO Balochistan Agricultural Project was featured at the prestigious International Horticultural Congress which took place in Brisbane, Australia. The Congress included more than 3,000 participants from some 100 countries who presented over 2,000 technical papers on various horticultural initiatives and their role in addressing key issues of modern society. The Pakistani delegation at the Congress was comprised of three specialists as well as government officials. The team presented papers on farmer marketing collectives, value chain development and the economic impact of the project. Launched in three districts of Balochistan in 2006, this USAID-funded FAO project has increased incomes of its beneficiaries by more than three times through improvements in the on-farm management of water, livestock and crops, as well as community development and marketing. Over the years, the project has been expanded to cover a total of eight districts of the province. In addition to showcasing development work in Pakistan, the Pakistani delegation used their participation to build linkages and familiarize with the latest developments in the sector of horticulture. “The information we have obtained at the Congress will be used to guide local initiatives for the development of the horticulture industry in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular,” said Abdul Rehman Buzdar, Secretary of Agriculture of Balochistan.

Training of data collectors for pharmaceutical sector assessment survey

WHO in collaboration with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination have built the consensus to conduct the Pharmaceutical Sector Assessment Survey. WHO has developed tools to measure the pharmaceutical sector performance and systematically monitor the progress of efforts to improve access to essential medicines, availability, use and compare situations in different health facilities at different levels of health care. A comprehensive assessment of the pharmaceutical sector helps to determine what the gaps are in order to design effective interventions and allows evaluation of the impact of interventions over time. Pakistan is a country with a double burden of communicable diseases combined with maternal and perinatal conditions and increasing trends in non-communicable diseases. Medicines account for a substantial 43 percent of total household health expenditure in Pakistan so assessing the performance of the public health service is critical.

The aim of training is to build national capacity on conducting, assessing, monitoring and evaluating country pharmaceutical situations which could help to plan policies to address issues of access and rational use of medicines. The results of assessment will serve as a monitoring mechanism to assess pharmaceutical sector performance. The information thus collected will help & guide to National & provincial health authorities in revising National health policy, provincial health strategies and medicine policies affecting access to medicines.
ILO’s global training module on entrepreneurship launched in Pakistan

The ILO and the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan launched a new programme today to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship in Pakistan. Almost thirty trainers from twelve universities were trained over two weeks on ILO’s globally recognised module, Start and Improve Your Business augmented by training on the gender dimensions of entrepreneurship.

Speaking at the launch of the programme, Mr Francesco d’Ovidio, Country Director, ILO Pakistan, emphasised the contribution women make to the economy, especially the millions of women involved in small and medium sized enterprises.

Shahnaz Kapadia, a renowned expert on gender and business development, who was the trainer for the gender and entrepreneurship sessions, was hopeful that a well-planned replication and outreach strategy, with a overt focus on women, “will change the entire landscape of entrepreneurship and women’s empowerment.” Sharing from her experiences at the grassroots, she said “there are so many talented women and men in Pakistan with such creative ideas, but because of lack of a supportive environment or accessible business development services, this talent is never realised.”

This unique initiative is supported by the ILO project Promoting Gender Equality for Decent Employment (GE4DE) funded by Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development (DFATD) Canada.

Sindh government prepares first ever policy on occupational safety & health

The first ever draft provincial Policy on Occupational Safety and Health was unveiled in Karachi, on 18 September 2014 by the Sindh Labour Department in a tripartite consultation with Employers, Workers, Civil society organizations and media. The Policy has been designed as part of the tripartite Joint Action Plan for ‘Promoting Workplace Safety & Health in Sindh’ developed with the technical support of International Labour Organization (ILO) in the aftermath of devastating factory fire in Baldia Town Karachi in September 2012.

The Policy recognizes the need for regulatory and enforcement issues, knowledge and awareness issues; and business and financial issues related to the occupational safety and health of workers in the province of Sindh. It also recognizes the need for strict application of OSH standards in all sectors of the economy and in all forms of employment relationships including formal and informal economic sectors.

After preparing the initial draft policy document, three tripartite Consultative Sessions were organized in Sukkur, Hyderabad and Karachi to get feedback and inputs to make this document more practical and relevant according to the ground realities. Representatives of major organizations of Employers, Workers, civil society, media and academia provided their frank and open feedback on the draft policy document and generally appreciated the efforts of the Sindh Labour Department in drafting a comprehensive document. Participants strongly suggested to establish separate comprehensive laws to ensure safety of workplaces and a separate Directorate of Safety and Health in the Province.

The Policy is now in advanced stage of approval and will be formally announced after approval of the Provincial Cabinet.
Literacy is integral to achieving all development goals

Can you imagine looking at this article and not being able to read it? For those of us who learned to read and write at an early age, reading and writing are very much a part of our daily lives. However, for 53 percent of Pakistani women and 28 percent of Pakistani men over the age of 15 (UNESCO projections for 2015), information that we take for granted is not readily accessible.

This year, the International Literacy Day theme was “literacy for sustainable development”. Development that is people-centered and truly sustainable depends heavily on an educated and empowered population where women and men alike have access to opportunities.

Women are particularly disadvantaged due to lower literacy rates. In the context of the theme we must also remember the importance of helping neo-literates to sustain and further develop their newly acquired literacy skills. Without further support many are at risk of losing these skills and relapsing into illiteracy.

There are a number of ways that literacy and numeracy can be promoted. One is by using the learner’s mother tongue initially, which has been shown to improve comprehension of other languages and subjects being taught. Another is through encouraging a reading culture, which can include promoting libraries, even at village level. Radios can also be a cost effective means of reaching learners. UNESCO has introduced the use of mobile telephones in Pakistan to help sustain literacy.

In 2000, countries committed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals by 2015. As just over a year remains, there is much to be done in order to achieve good progress towards, or achievement of these goals. This calls for action with a renewed sense of urgency. UNESCO is committed to helping the Government of Pakistan make good progress on literacy.

Hameed A. Hakeem

Improved disaster reporting and a flood vigilant community role critical to enhance efforts for flood mitigation in Pakistan

The two-day international workshop, capacity building of community elders and media towards flood vigilance and disaster reporting organized by UNESCO in partnership with the National University of Sciences and Technology in Islamabad, aimed to strengthen the potential role of community elders and reporting on floods by the media.

The recent flood in Pakistan further increases the workshop’s significance, building on UNESCO’s efforts to strengthen flood forecasting, early warning systems and information dissemination through media to the local communities for reducing the human and socioeconomic impacts of flooding. In collaboration with NUST, the workshop would help streamline the standard operating procedures for the media on disaster reporting. The introduction of private media and realizing its important role, especially the significant role it played in Pakistan’s 2005 devastating earthquake and the flooding of 2010-2014 was important. The workshop provided an in-depth understanding of floods to transform the perspective of disaster and disaster risk reduction reporting and coverage through timely warning dissemination to an informed community through local media to minimize the vulnerability and risk factors. During the two day workshop, training on the use of hand crank radios was imparted to the participants. UNESCO will be handing over 1565 radio sets to NDMA for distribution in the local communities residing in the flood plains for receiving flood warnings and information during the monsoon season.
UNDP launched Human Development Report - 2014

Staggering rates of poverty, high inequality and frequent natural disasters and crises threaten the progress of human development in developing countries. Addressing these challenges requires a host of initiatives, including universal provision of social services and a strong system of social security benefits, says the 2014 Human Development Report released in Islamabad by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan. The Report offers a fresh perspective on what makes people vulnerable, and proposes ways to strengthen resilience. The Human Development Report is an independent study intended to stimulate an informed debate on global development issues and to highlight trends for policy makers.

Despite overall gains in human development, progress in all regions decelerated over 2008–2013 compared to 2000–2008. In the last 2 decades, most countries have registered significant improvements in human development. Now, vulnerability and the impact of crises and disasters are undermining the hard won progress or slowing down its growth. The Report asserts that those who face multiple deprivations are especially at risk of falling back into poverty if a disaster or crisis should occur. The human development approach provides a holistic approach to address vulnerability and build resilience.

UNDP also released its 2014 Human Development Index (HDI) for 187 countries and UN-recognized territories, which ranks countries in terms of economic and human development indicators. Pakistan’s HDI value for 2013 is 0.537 – which is in the low human development category – positioning the country at 146 out of 187 countries and territories.

http://hdr.undp.org/en

On World Food Day, UN World Food Programme highlights progress towards zero hunger even as multiple emergencies flare

Amid several hunger emergencies – both natural and man-made – the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) marked World Food Day by highlighting both the challenges around the world and the real progress being made toward “zero hunger.”

The theme for this year’s World Food Day was “family farming,” one of the many ways WFP is supporting local economies to build self-sufficiency and people to achieve zero hunger in their communities.

In Pakistan, WFP works in close partnership with the Government and aligns its strategies with national priorities addressing sustainable food security and nutrition in the country also focusing on enhancing national resilience to disasters, crises and external shocks. WFP and partners aim to improve economic opportunities and promote social inclusion in FATA, enhance readiness to respond as well as boost community resilience in disaster-prone areas and address nutrition and education in the country.

“Agriculture is central to both economic growth and development in Pakistan,” said Peter Scott-Bowden, WFP Pakistan Deputy Country Director. “In the past three years, the Government of Pakistan has contributed over 300,000 metric tons of wheat to WFP to support displaced families and help communities re-establish their lives and livelihoods, primarily farming, in areas of return.”
Drugs and the media: regional counter narcotics awareness workshop for journalists

UNODC under its Regional Programme for Afghanistan and its Neighbouring Countries organized a two day workshop on “Drugs and the Media, The Regional Counter Narcotics Awareness Workshop for Journalists” in Bhurban, Pakistan.

UNODC is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and transnational organized crime and operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices such as the ones in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is the UN Office with the exclusive mandate to counter illicit drug trafficking, and crime prevention worldwide. This regional workshop for journalists builds on previous Counter Narcotics related advocacy and public awareness raising initiatives by UNODC in the region. The overall aim is to publicize the efforts of the respective governments of the region, promote public awareness through the media which is a comprehensive tool for public awareness, and to promote counter narcotics regional cooperation which will complement the specialized support provided by the UNODC Regional Programme for Promoting Counter Narcotics Efforts in Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries.

UNHCR urges Afghan refugees in Pakistan to renew their Proof of Registration cards before 31 December 2014 to retain refugee status

The UN refugee agency urges all Afghan refugees, who hold Proof of Registration (PoR) cards that have expired by 31 December 2012 and who have not yet collected their renewed PoR cards, to approach their nearest registration centre, before the deadline of 31 December 2014. In order to continue to be considered as refugees, Afghans with PoR cards must renew their cards by this date. Following the decision by the Government of Pakistan in July 2013 to extend the validity of the PoR cards, the process of replacing PoR cards that expired in December 2012 with the new cards started in February this year and will conclude on 31 December 2014. The PoR card is an important identity document that provides temporary legal stay of registered Afghans in Pakistan, and is valid until 31 December 2015. During the PoR card renewal exercise that was jointly conducted by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and UNHCR, to date more than 90% of Afghan refugees have received their new PoR cards.

Importance of disaster risk reduction and informed communities emphasized for risks mitigation

International Day for Disaster Reduction observed in Quetta, Balochistan with this year’s theme, “Older People and Disasters”

UNESCO in partnership with the University of Balochistan, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan, UNDP, UNICEF and UNWOMEN marked the International Day for Disaster Reduction at the Balochistan Boy Scouts Association Headquarters in Quetta.

Students, Teachers, representatives of NGOs and Governments departments attended the event and also participated in advocacy walk on the importance of DRR. The International Day for Disaster Reduction has been marked since 1989 on 13 October each year. The day aims to raise awareness, encourage masses and government’s participation in building a disaster resilient communities and nations. The occasion also served to promote a global culture of disaster reduction including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

UNESCO, in collaboration with the University of Balochistan, launched the awareness raising sessions as part of UNESCO’s Science Sector initiatives on DRR awareness. 20 sessions will be imparted in the coming days to students, teachers, NGOs and government officials in the province with special focus on female’s participation.
Investing in quality education and teachers crucial to progress and a better society

UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and WFP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan organized a conference to mark World Teacher’s Day 2014. This year’s theme for the Day was “Invest in the future, invest in teachers.” In relation to the importance of this observance, the Pakistan Education for All (EFA) Review Report 2015 was also launched during the conference. Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Development Muhammad Ahsan Raja extended his gratitude to all the participants and lauded the efforts of millions of teachers all over the world who devoted their lives to their mission, teaching of children, youth and adults. He launched the Pakistan Education for All (EFA) Review Report 2015 that aimed to ensure systematic monitoring of the progress towards achieving Education for All goals. The task to generate data for all the indicators of six EFA Goals was accomplished by the Education Management Information System at the Academy of Educational Planning and Management.

Speaking on the occasion, representatives of WFP, UNICEF and ILO emphasized the need for more joint efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in education. However, they applauded the Government of Pakistan for taking a number of initiatives to accelerate progress towards the achievement of EFA goals and stressed the need to improve the educational planning and management system of Pakistan, aligning and enrolling over 5 million out-of-school children and improving incentives for teachers.

As the lead agency for Education for All, UNESCO has been mandated to coordinate the international efforts to reach the goals by the end of 2015.
UNDP highlights the role of technology in strengthening democracy in Pakistan

In collaboration with the Government of Australia and the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a three-day conference on the role of technology in strengthening democracy.

The debate centered on the opportunities to leverage technological developments to help advance the quality of democratic process and citizen engagement, and the potential for technology to exacerbate the marginalization of constituencies.

The conference brought together people from the private, public and non-profit sectors to discuss the core governance challenges of Pakistan, and possible technological solutions that can be developed, particularly by the growing tech sector, to help address these challenges.

The sessions over the three days brought together experts from a range of sectors highlighting the innovative work of Pakistan’s established and emerging leaders in civic sector and e-governance technologies. The sessions on the second day explored how technology is enhancing the integrity of electoral processes. This included the concept of e-parliament and how ICTs can help parliaments improve their performance across three core functions: law making, oversight and representation. It also focused on political parties and technologies in political party development and constituency outreach, particular among youth.

The last day focused on how technology is changing the way civil society engages as digital observers, civic educators, and social actors. The event demonstrated how the introduction of ICT can improve the oversight legislative and representative functions of parliament.

Winners of the Cleantech Pakistan competition awarded by the Federal Minister for Science and Technology

An impressive awards ceremony was held where the winners of the 2014 Cleantech Pakistan competition were presented their awards by Mr. Zahid Hamid, Federal Minister for Science and Technology.

This year, the programme has supported twenty-eight SMEs and Start-ups in Pakistan through a programme of extensive mentoring, training, access to investors and opportunities to showcase their innovations. Winners were given prizes ranging from US$ 25,000 to US$ 30,000, plus the National Winner will be given mentorship and training in Silicon Valley, USA.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Hamid stressed the importance of innovation and the efforts which the present government is doing for the promotion and advancement of Science and Technology. He termed Science and Technology a tool for developing countries like Pakistan to face the challenges of globalization and specifically highlighted the role of UNIDO and its partners in arranging this international event, which will promote entrepreneurship as well as contribute to the mitigations of Pakistan’s energy shortage problem.

The scale and exposure of the event is indicative of the excitement and commitment in Pakistan to look for new areas of technical support at the policy, sectoral and entrepreneurial levels which can provide an enabling environment for the promotion of clean energy technologies in Pakistan.
Handwashing one important tool in the Ebola fight

As the world celebrated the seventh Global Handwashing Day, UNICEF said the fight against Ebola further underscores the practice of handwashing in disease prevention.

“Handwashing with soap is one of the cheapest, most effective ‘vaccines’ against viral diseases, from the seasonal flu, to the common cold,” said Sanjay Wijesekera, head of UNICEF’s global water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes. “It is not a magic bullet, but it is a means of additional defence which is cheap and readily available.”

UNICEF has been leading in raising awareness about Ebola in the affected countries, working to counter misconceptions about the disease that put even more people at risk. UNICEF has also distributed protective supplies such as gowns, gloves, and bleach – as well as 1.5 million bars of soap in Sierra Leone alone, and millions more in Liberia and Guinea.

Apart from Ebola, figures released recently by UNICEF and the World Health Organization say in 2013 more than 340,000 children under five – al-
most 1,000 a day – died from diarrhoeal diseases due to a lack of safe water, sanitation and basic hygiene. As the Ebola response takes its toll on the health services in the affected countries, the practice of handwashing is even more important in warding off these common diseases. The annual Global Handwashing Day celebrations are occasions to emphasise the role of handwashing with soap in the prevention of common but potentially lethal diseases such as diarrhoea, and many countries around the world are holding activities to promote the practice.

www.globalhandwashingday.org
The year's World Food Day was celebrated with a focus on the role of smallholder and family farmers in the fight to eradicate hunger. The theme of this year's celebration was ‘Family Farming: Feeding the world, caring for the earth’, that highlighted the importance of family farmers to food security and better livelihoods.

Pakistan has about 8.26 million farms that cultivate some 53 million acres. Yet the majority of the poor live in the rural areas and are often among the most disadvantaged. In observance of the day, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized an event at the National Agricultural Research Centre in Islamabad. Messages from the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan were read out on the occasion. Special stalls were set up to share innovative approaches in the agricultural sector in Pakistan by FAO, WFP, NARC, OXFAM and various other private and public sector entities.

While talking to the media, Mr. Francesco, FAO Deputy Representative to Pakistan said that throughout the world, family farmers play a crucial socio-economic role in the face of serious challenges and they need to be recognized and strengthened by adopting better agricultural practices that help these family farmers. Recognizing this, the United Nations designated 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming.
**FAO celebrated the International Day of Rural Women to bring rural women into the limelight**

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) celebrated the International Day of Rural Women to bring rural women—often invisible workers—into the limelight and to recognize their contribution in enhancing agricultural and rural development in Pakistan. Statistics show that most of the poor around the world are women, and these women are responsible for feeding their hungry families as well as themselves. The rural women day is a tribute to women whose hard work and labour not only sustains their households but also large urban populations around the world. Despite their mammoth contribution to the world’s food security and availability, these women are often the last to gain access to resources, training, and financial loans.

In observance of the occasion, FAO supported and participated in the 7th Annual Conference on “Rural Women: Democracy and Peace” organized by Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA)—a leading NGO working with rural women in Pakistan. The event was attended by some 2,000 women farmers and other professionals including female parliamentarians. Francisco Gamarro, Deputy FAO Representative to Pakistan assured the delegates that “FAO is committed to working more closely with the women to promote sustainable development in agriculture with better gender equality and empowerment.”

**New Representative of UNICEF Pakistan arrives**

The new UNICEF Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Angela Kearney, has presented her credentials to the Government of Pakistan. In the framework of the country’s UN Delivering as One Programme, Ms. Kearney will head a multi-sectorial operation in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, as well as in education and child protection. With the number of polio cases still rising in Pakistan, one of the major challenges and priorities in her new function will also be UNICEF’s continuous support to the country’s polio eradication programme.

“I can see that the country has made significant progress in protecting and promoting the rights of its youngest and most vulnerable citizens,” says Ms. Kearney. “Much more needs to be done, however, to ensure that each child has a good start in life with access to health care, vaccination, a balanced and sufficient diet, education, hygiene and clean water. Most importantly all children must be protected from violence and abuse” she adds.

Angela Kearney brings with her more than twenty years of experience in leading positions in protecting and promoting child rights. Before coming to Pakistan she was the UNICEF Representative in Indonesia. Ms. Kearney first joined UNICEF in 1998, as an emergency officer in Sudan. In 2002 she transferred to Afghanistan as Deputy Representative. Before working for UNICEF Angela Kearney held various positions within Save the Children in Iraq, Angola and Afghanistan.
UNDP and ILO to impart employable skills to North Waziristan families

UNDP and ILO will organise employable skills training and help facilitate employment opportunities to 200 women and men from North-Waziristan Agency who are temporarily residing in District Bannu due to the on-going military operation. An agreement between the two UN Agencies was signed in Islamabad under UNDP’s ‘Community Resilience Project for NWA Displaced Families’.

The new project will engage the locally available Government and private training institutions as well as civil society organizations with ample experience of organizing good quality vocational training and provision of post-training support in case of emergencies. A major focus will remain on training the maximum number of ‘construction workers’ who would be required to take part in re-construction of the NWA area where most of the existing buildings, houses, and other infrastructure has been badly damaged during the ongoing fighting. Apart from that, separate training courses for women would be organized at most convenient locations for them to actively participate and learn new skills for increasing family income.

The trained women and men would be supported for employment by the ILO’s existing Emergency Employment Information Centre in Bannu District through job-search, setting up enterprises and bridging with local employers. The EEIC has, as of today, registered more than 900 women and men who aspire to be employed and facilitated more than 500 of them for different employment opportunities.

The political economy of the budget

The budget is one of the most powerful fiscal instruments at the disposal of the incumbent governments to implement their political commitments and development agenda. Unfortunately the debate when it happens is overly focused on allocations and expenditures and rarely on the critical issues of transparency and accountability of the budget making process.

In Pakistan and elsewhere there are at least three obstacles in improving the transparency of budget processes: weak citizens’ involvement, limited parliamentary debates and unavailability or opaque information on budgets. The concept of participatory budgeting for increased citizens’ involvement is nonexistent in Pakistan. The participatory budgeting concept works well at the municipal level and in the presence of a well-functioning local government system: a platform tragically absent in Pakistan. Like participation of citizens, parliamentarian engagement in the budget making process is also limited in Pakistan where 15-20 calendar days are allocated in average for parliamentary debate. Budget sessions are extremely short leaving insufficient time for substantive discussions. The third aspect which will help improve transparency in budget making is access to nontechnical and easily understandable information about the budgets. In addition to the numerous bulky technical documents which the parliamentarians have to read in a very limited time, the federal government and four provinces use different formats for the budget documents.

It is urgent for Pakistan to review its budget making process to make it participatory, transparent, and accountable and impact oriented. Pakistan must test out the concept of participatory budget at the district or municipal level to give voice to the poor segments in budgetary processes and to enhance the effectiveness and impact of budgets. Achieving the MDGs and the government’s goals is not only about raising revenues, but also and more immediately about how they are allocated, spent and tracked.
Germany and UNDP partner to support displaced persons with 1 million euros

The partnership between Germany and UNDP aims to help the provincial and district authorities to manage the emergency situation and prepare for the return and rehabilitation process. The measures will directly benefit the affected people by working with both the displaced persons and the host communities to improve social cohesion, access to basic services and increase livelihood opportunities. The acquired skills will make the displaced persons more self-reliant during the displacement period and give them the means to participate actively in the return and rehabilitation phase.

A healthy and bright future for all - UAE Pakistan Assistance Program

United Arab Emirates and Pakistan enjoy long, friendly relations and Pakistan has been fortunate enough to have UAE as its most trusted and reliable ally. The rulers of UAE have extended their technical and financial expertise and services to Pakistan to help surmount obstacles hampering development in various social and humanitarian fields.

Thanking the UAE government, Dr Elias Durry, WHO Team Leader-Polio said that UAE’s support to the Polio program makes it function in very difficult circumstances in northern Pakistan. He hoped to replicate the same approach in other areas like Karachi where polio cases have been detected. Emirates Polio Campaign under the slogan “a healthy and bright future for all” along with the Pakistan Army devised an intelligent strategic plan to fight polio with a target to reach 8 million children at a cost of US$ 9.2 million in 3 months in its first phase.

On this occasion, a documentary titled “Spirit of Solidarity” was screened highlighting various significant humanitarian and welfare projects undertaken by the program especially focusing on the eradication of polio in Pakistan. The documentary was a true testimony of the friendly ties between UAE and Pakistan that have flourished and strengthened with the passage of time.
Empowering Persons with Disabilities – workshop participants call for policies and legislation to make information and knowledge more accessible

UNESCO Islamabad, in collaboration with Special Talent Exchange Programme organized a media sensitization workshop on Enabling Universal Access to Information and Knowledge Platform for persons with disabilities. More than 50 media practitioners, representatives and officials of Civil Society Organizations, Government, and the United Nations participated in the workshop and made a resounding appeal for taking concrete steps towards barrier free accessibility to information and knowledge for persons with disabilities. The workshop aimed at bringing together various stakeholders, to raise awareness and learn about ways of improving accessibility to information and knowledge platforms and disability-friendly warning systems through information and communications technologies, sign language, policy, technical and design modifications with a particular focus on barriers faced by persons with hearing and visual impairment.

UNESCO has taken the lead on a number of initiatives, including by publishing its 2013 Global Report, on empowering persons with disabilities through information and communication technologies. The Global Report addresses strong recommendations to all stakeholders – from decision-makers to educators, civil society and industry – on how concretely to advance the rights of people living with disabilities through technologies that can improve access to knowledge and information.

Going Beyond2015: Is Higher Education Ready?

To foster consultations on the role of higher education institutions in the Post 2015 agenda, the United Nations Information Centre and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) joined hands with COMSATS Institute of Information Technology to organize a conference on the theme of “Going Beyond2015: Is Higher Education Ready?”

Dr. Sania Nishtar, a former caretaker Minister for Education and Advisor to the government in her a riveting keynote address said that the potential in the Pakistani higher education sector needs to be tapped into to meet upcoming challenges. She asserted that after a decade of investment, the higher education sector is ready for new challenges and growing responsibilities.

She called for more research in sectors where the country was struggling, including energy and water supply. “Research should be linked to academia and industry to fill the gap and make it more practical,” she added.

Ann Keeling, Country Representative UNFPA reviews that Pakistan has 6th largest population in the world, where a dominating population of around 55m comprises on youth. “An educated and highly professional skilled youth could lead to the better development environment of the country” she said.

In the second session, well diversified groups of participants made strong recommendations on the role of universities in contributing towards post 2015 Development agenda.
UNDP Pakistan releases the third edition of Development Advocate Pakistan – The Political Economy of the Budget

In an effort to share and foster robust national public discourse on development challenges and solutions in Pakistan and to provide a platform for Pakistani authorities, civil society and intelligentsia to exchange ideas on key development solution pathways in Pakistan, UNDP launched its quarterly development magazine, The Development Advocate this year.

Mr. Marc-Andre Franche, UNDP Pakistan Country Director said: “It is urgent for Pakistan to review its budget making process to make it participatory, transparent, and accountable and impact oriented.” The discussion was moderation by Mr. Khurram Husain, a leading business and economy journalist. He previously taught at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. He is assistant editor in Dawn Newspaper. He was also the Pakistan Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC. The Chief Guest was Mr. Syed Murad Ali Shah, Advisor on Finance to the Chief Minister of Sindh.

IOM’s lime training programme: spearheading the construction of durable and resilient shelters in Pakistan

A series of lime training workshops have been organized by IOM and its technical training partner Strawbuild to support the reconstruction of climate-adapted, resilient shelters in areas affected by the 2012 floods.

The training initiative has been developed as part of IOM’s One Room Shelter programme, which was initiated in response to the 2010 floods and has since supported over 60,000 flood-affected families to construct safer shelters in southern Pakistan.

Trainings combine practical and theoretical sessions on lime techniques, soil investigation and soil analysis techniques, trial mix designs, weight density and reactivity tests. Lime has been used in construction for centuries and forms a large part of Sindhi heritage and vernacular architecture. Its superior plasticity and workability enhances both the performance and the aesthetic of finished structures, increasing resilience to external shocks.

IOM Pakistan Chief of Mission Enrico Ponziani said: ‘by providing tools and ongoing technical support we can help communities to build back better and facilitate them to procure, produce and utilise high quality lime in the construction of flood resistant shelters’.

To continue the success of the trainings and increase the use of lime in reconstruction going forward, field staff will be mentored to disseminate guidance throughout villages targeted for early recovery shelter support. A lime manual is also being adapted to One Room Shelter methodology and design, and a market survey will map hydraulic lime availability.
Global Hand Washing Day celebration in Kurram Agency

With a view of raising awareness regarding importance of hygiene practices amongst the Temporarily Dislocated People (TDPs) in Kurram Agency, UN-Habitat, in collaboration with WHO, celebrated the Global Hand Washing day on 15th October 2014 with the communities. This event raised the general understanding of hand washing with soap as an effective and affordable method of preventing diseases and in maintaining hygiene and sanitation. The event was held in five schools of Sadda in Kurram Agency and was attended a total of 2,448 students and teachers in the area.

On this occasion, participants delivered speeches on importance of hand washing and general cleanliness. An appropriate method of hand washing was demonstrated to the students followed by a practical session. Soaps were also distributed among the students to motivate them to maintain hand washing practices in daily life.
Public and private sector partnerships key to ensure improved nutrition in Pakistan

To foster the efforts for scaling up nutrition in Pakistan, a meeting of the “Scaling Up Nutrition Movement’s Business Network” was organized in Islamabad. The SBN is a global network supporting SUN countries bringing together the public and private sectors ensuring their respective advantages will substantiate actions to scale up nutrition.

To date, 54 nations have joined this movement and Pakistan was number 34 to underwrite SUN to tackle high rates of malnutrition along with micronutrient deficiencies among children below the age of five and pregnant and lactating women.

The representatives of the private sector from multinational and national companies, chambers of commerce and associations took keen interest in the proceedings of the meeting and committed to join the SBN as well as join hands with the public sector to manage malnutrition in Pakistan. It was highlighted that relevant profits should be the means not the objective of the business sector and that they understand that investing in nutrition specific and sensitive interventions are also viable for business. Many companies have made commitments to SBN globally. Looking at the potential of the business and public-private partnerships, the Pakistan SUN business network is expected to support the country’s efforts in combating malnutrition.

FAO, US Department of Agriculture present a state-of-the-art crop yields forecasting tool to the government of Pakistan

Representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and FAO presented a new geo-spatial system for forecasting crop which will increase the accuracy and decrease the costs of data collection on crop yields each year.

Pakistan is a major player in the global commodities market. A poor year in production of wheat or rice in Pakistan can have an impact on global food prices and lead to increased spending both worldwide and in Pakistan, thus reducing food security in the country. If the government knows that the yield of wheat or rice is going to be low, it can arrange measures to prevent food shortages. Similarly, if the yield of cotton (which is a major export crop in Pakistan) is expected to be low, the country can either import cotton to keep our factories running, or adjust export targets and the plans for that year’s budget spending accordingly.

With U.S. funding, FAO provided the software and hardware for the crops monitoring system and trains staff at SUPARCO, as well as at the Crop Reporting Services of Punjab and Sindh to support the adoption of satellite imagery data and for more accurate forecasting of crop yields.

In addition to the officials of FAO and the U.S. Embassy, the workshop included representatives of the federal government and the governments of all provinces and regions of Pakistan, as well as SUPARCO, Crop Research Services, academia, farmers and the media. Specialists from FAO headquarters in Rome, and the University of Maryland also attended the event.
School supplies worth $14.4 million handed over to KP/FATA by Saudi Fund for Development and UNICEF

School supplies worth 14.4 million US dollars donated by the Saudi Fund for Development and procured by UNICEF were officially handed over to the Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

UNICEF has provided school supplies including furniture, IT and library equipment to more than 1,000 schools including 343 girls’ schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administrative Tribal Areas benefitting more than 128,000 students and teachers.

“I express my personal and official gratitude to the Saudi Fund for Development for its support towards improving the teaching and learning environment through its generous contribution to provide furniture and other necessary supplies to schools in KP and FATA,” said Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. “The importance of a good school environment cannot be overemphasised to ensure quality teaching and learning and most importantly the holistic growth of the child.”

Zafar Javaid, Head Teacher from one of the recipient schools in Malakand Division said, “If we want our students to compete...
at international level, we must provide them quality education. And to ensure this, we must meet the targets set by the new education policy.”
The United Nations in Pakistan opened a photo exhibition in Islamabad, to celebrate United Nations Day 2014. “Pakistani People and United Nations - Human stories through photography” showcases a collection of professional photographs documenting human stories on the main areas of the work of the United Nation in Pakistan. A selection of unique photos depicting Pakistani peacekeepers was also included to pay tribute to the valuable contribution of Pakistan to UN Peacekeeping missions around the world. Mr. Timo Pakkala, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in his opening remarks highlighted that UN Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter and that the UN in Pakistan serves daily millions of Pakistani people through 19 agencies, funds and programmes operating in the country. Mr. Pervaiz Rashid, Federal Minister Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, Law, Justice and
Human Rights, participated in the event as Chief Guest and appreciated the photos presented at the exhibition and added that such remarkable work deserves to come to the world’s attention and can play a vital role in building public support. Mr. Vittorio Cammarota, Director of the UN Information Centre said that photography is one of the most powerful tools to share human stories and thanked Lok Virsa for their support in making the event successful. The exhibition will remain open to public for one month, from 27 October through 26 November 2014.
Mohammad Yousuf, a 30-year old farmer from Quetta District, is proud about the many improvements that his community has made with support from the FAO’s Balochistan Agriculture Programme.

Yousuf is one of 136,000 men, women and children in rural Balochistan who have benefited from improvements in the management of water, crops and livestock as well as community development and marketing.

The programme was launched in 2005 to increase food security and incomes for Balochistan’s small farmers. It currently works in 14 districts with funding from the USAID and Australian Aid. A recent survey has shown that beneficiaries in the three pilot districts have increased their daily per capita incomes from US$0.7 in 2006 to US$2.5 in 2013.

One of the first activities undertaken in Yousuf’s village was construction of a pipeline to bring water from the nearby mountain to the fields. FAO funded equipment and materials, while the villagers contributed labour. “It used to take us four hours to water our fields, but now, it takes only minutes,” says Yousuf.

FAO also helped to level fields, introduce better varieties of crops, adopt new farming methods and strengthen marketing. With each change, incomes and lives have improved too.
One in eight women is at high risk of getting breast cancer at some point in her life, the highest rate in South Asia. In Pakistan, this leads to over 40,000 deaths every year.

In an effort to foster a greater awareness of breast cancer and promote efforts to develop cost-effective solutions, the United Nations in Pakistan has signed a MoU with the Pakistan Breast Cancer Trust to support awareness and advocacy efforts.

UN Resident Coordinator a.i., Ms. Lola Castro, pointed out that “cervical and breast cancer cause more deaths than any other form of cancer among women in the developing world, and if current trends continue, deaths from breast and cervical cancer will very soon overtake maternal mortality everywhere in the world.”

The panelists discussed the devastating nature of cancer and breast cancer in particular, and provided an overview of the facilities and groundbreaking research being undertaken to combat the disease. There is a need for Pakistan to have its own studies and data on the disease, and evidence based guidelines on prevention and treatment.

Minister of State for Health, Ms. Saira Afzal Tarar, informed the participants that there is no national cancer registry or national health information system, although hospitals are collecting the data on their own. She also alluded to an announcement that would be made shortly, regarding a Government-run health insurance scheme.
Radio interview: Democracy and governance

17 September 2014: Mr. Vittorio Cammarota, Director UN Information Centre in an interview with Radio Pakistan spoke about the significance of the International Day of Democracy and initiatives taken by the United Nations to strengthen good governance and democracy in the country. He also highlighted the role of young people in leading and promoting the democracy and democratic values in the society.

PTV talk show: Climate change

23 September 2014: UNDP Pakistan’s Country Director Marc-André Franche and Ambassador Shahid Kamal, Adviser to COMSATS took part in a PTV talk show on Climate Change. They emphasized that there is growing recognition that no nation will be immune to the impacts of the changing climate system. The case for Pakistan is compelling as Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change. They urged the government and policy makers to take concrete action to mitigate the effects of climate change and said investments in water conservation, renewable energy, agriculture, water storage and reforestation are vital to sustainable development.

Radio talk show: Climate change

23 September 2014: Radio Pakistan aired a special programme on Climate Change and its impact on Pakistan. Ambassador Shahid Kamal, Adviser to COMSATS and Munazza Naqvi from UNDP Pakistan participated in the programme and talked about Pakistan’s vulnerability to climate change and the need for building climate resilience for promoting economic growth and development of the country.
PTV talk show: Tuberculosis

30 September 2014: PTV World aired a special talk show ‘Diplomatic Enclave’ to raise awareness about tuberculosis. Dr Matteo Zignol, Senior Medical Officer from World Health Organization, Dr Sabira Tahseen and Dr Ejaz Qadeer from the National TB Program of Pakistan took part in the discussion. They informed the viewers that the spread of the disease is alarming in Pakistan. It is shown as the fifth highest country in the world for cases of tuberculosis. They also shared useful information about the precautions and treatments available for its control.

Radio talk show on tuberculosis

30 September 2014: Dr Matteo Zignol, Senior Medical Officer from World Health Organization and Dr Sabira Qadeer from the National TB Program of Pakistan shared their views about the spread of tuberculosis and its prevention and treatments in a talk show at Radio Pakistan. They said that around one third of the world’s population is infected with Mycobacterium Tuberculosis. TB is curable but current efforts to find, treat and cure every patient with the disease are not sufficient.

PTV talk show: World Food Day

16 October 2014: PTV World broadcast a special talk show during its programme ‘Diplomatic Enclave’ on the occasion of World Food Day. Mr. Peter Scott-Bowden, Deputy Country Director, World Food Programme (WFP), Mr. Francisco Gamarro – Senior Resilience Coordinator, Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Mr. Seerat Asghar, Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security & Research, Govt of Pakistan took part in the discussion. They highlighted both the challenges of food security and importance of family farming for better livelihood and eliminating hunger and poverty.
Charity plays a significant role in the work of the United Nations and its agencies. Charity may come in many forms, from the volunteering of time and expertise to straightforward financial or in-kind donations by individuals, corporations or philanthropic foundations. Whatever the case, such generosity and kindness, with no expectation of financial gain, can make profound differences in human well-being. At times of intense fiscal and budgetary constraints, charity takes on greater importance in global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and implement what we hope will be an ambitious post-2015 agenda. While charity cannot be seen as a replacement or alternative to public spending, it plays an invaluable complementary role.
International Day of Peace 21 September 2014

Today is the International Day of Peace. Each year, on this day, the United Nations calls for a global ceasefire. We ask combatants to put down their arms so all can breathe the air of peace.

Peace and security are essential foundations for social progress and sustainable development.

That is why, three decades ago, the United Nations affirmed the right of peoples to peace.

Throughout the coming year, we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. Our organisation is founded on the pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

International Day of Democracy 15 September 2014

As we observe this year’s International Day of Democracy, the world seems more turbulent than ever. In many regions and in many ways, the values of the United Nations, including some of the most fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the UN Charter, are being tested and challenged.

I call on members of the largest generation of youth in history to confront challenges and consider what you can do to resolve them.

To take control of your destiny and translate your dreams into a better future for all. To contribute to building stronger and better democratic societies. On this International Day of Democracy, I call on young people everywhere to lead a major push for inclusive democracy around the world.

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons 26 September 2014

The world has long recognized that nuclear disarmament offers the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons, and that any such use would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

Nuclear disarmament is therefore not an idealistic dream, but an urgent necessity to meet the genuine security interests of all humanity.

It has been forty-four years since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entered into force, committing its States parties to undertake negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament.

The time has come for those negotiations to begin. The lack of such negotiations is disrupting the delicate balance between international commitments to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Let us revive nuclear disarmament as a top international priority, in the interest of the peace and security of all and of future generations.
International Day of Older Persons 1 October 2014

Older persons are playing an increasingly significant role in society as they grow in number and as healthcare improves in some parts of the world.

Older persons make wide-ranging contributions to economic and social development. However, discrimination and social exclusion persist. We must overcome this bias in order to ensure a socially and economically active, secure and healthy ageing population. The post-2015 development agenda offers a historic opportunity for the United Nations and its Member States to strengthen the rights and role of older persons in society as an integral part of our commitment to “leave no one behind”.

International Day of Non-Violence 2 October 2014

On this International Day of Non-Violence, we commemorate the philosophy of the late Mahatma Gandhi, who through his example proved that peaceful protest could accomplish much more than military aggression.

The principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, the year of Gandhi’s death, owe much to his beliefs. There is no greater tool than education to enhance human dignity, promote a culture of non-violence, and build lasting peace. Through education, we can craft new ways of living with each other and the planet. Education can also lay the foundation for developing new forms of global citizenship and solidarity that are so essential in today’s world.

World Habitat Day 6 October 2014

This year, World Habitat Day is devoted to giving a voice to slum dwellers. Often, people in the slums live in near-anonymity: no address, no census and no idea when their living conditions will improve. By learning from their experiences, city planners and policy makers can enhance the well-being of a significant portion of the human family.

Let us hear from people who live in slums what has worked and what has not – and what we need to do. On this World Habitat Day, I encourage governments, businesses, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations to give slum dwellers a voice – and to listen to what they have to say. We have the technology and the know-how to build economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cities based on local solutions.
World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the challenges faced by people with severe mental health problems, and what can be done to make their lives better. This year, we focus particularly on those living with schizophrenia, and the families and friends who help them cope.

Around the world, some 21 million people suffer from schizophrenia, a disorder that affects perception, cognition, behaviour and emotions. In places where health and social services are unable to provide support, schizophrenia and other severe mental disorders can banish people to the borders of society, leaving them unemployed and homeless.

On this World Mental Health Day, I call for health and social care systems to work together to provide opportunities for education, employment and housing. I encourage health services to expand care in the community and to support the creation of support networks for patients and carers.

International Day of the Girl Child

All over the world, an alarming number of adolescent girls are assaulted, beaten, raped, mutilated and even murdered. The threat of violence at the hands of family members, partners, teachers and peers grossly violates their rights, diminishes their power and suppresses their potential.

To end the cycle of violence against adolescent girls we must go beyond raising awareness and take action to equip girls with knowledge, skills, resources and power to determine their own path in life. We must provide them with safe transport, and access to sources of energy and water, quality health services and supportive environments that will allow them to thrive.

On this International Day of the Girl Child, I call on all governments to take action to end all forms of violence against girls in all parts of the world. Together, we must create a world where violence against women and girls is never tolerated and girls are always empowered to reach their full potential.

International Day of Rural Women

My mother has lived her whole life in the countryside. Although she did not receive much of a formal education, I grew up appreciating her wisdom, resilience and intelligence. In the course of my subsequent public service, I came to see that these qualities are shared by millions of rural women around the world.

When we give rural women access to productive agricultural and natural resources, we empower them. They, in turn, can contribute more to alleviating hunger and boosting the ability of their communities to cope with the effects of climate change, land degradation and displacement. This benefits all people.
Today, and every day, we eat thanks to the labours of family farmers. They run the vast majority of farms in the world. They preserve natural resources and agro-biodiversity. They are the cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable agriculture and food systems. Family farmers are key to unlocking global progress. But they are at a disadvantage when it comes to access to technology, services and markets. And they are acutely exposed to extreme weather, climate change and environmental degradation. Ensuring equal access – particularly for women – to productive resources is essential to empowering the world’s 500 million smallholder farmers to help eradicate poverty and safeguard the environment. On this World Food Day, let us resolve to end hunger in our lifetimes.

On this day we recommit to think, decide and act together against extreme poverty -- and plan for a world where no-one is left behind. We have reached the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of people living in poverty ahead of time. At least 700 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty between 1990 and 2010. As we prepare the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and address the threat of climate change, we must not lose sight of our most fundamental obligation: to eliminate poverty in all its forms. We must also end the marginalization of people living in poverty. Their knowledge and perspectives are vital if we are to find meaningful, durable solutions.

The United Nations is needed more than ever at this time of multiple crises. Poverty, disease, terrorism, discrimination and climate change are exacting a heavy toll. Millions of people continue to suffer deplorable exploitation through bonded labour, human trafficking, sexual slavery or unsafe conditions in factories, fields and mines. The global economy remains an uneven playing field. At this critical moment, let us reaffirm our commitment to empowering the marginalized and vulnerable. On United Nations Day, I call on Governments and individuals to work in common cause for the common good.

With the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to establish World Cities Day, we now have an annual date on which to celebrate one of humankind’s greatest and most complex creations. This new day is one of the legacies of Expo 2010 Shanghai, at which the international community explored urban best practices and concepts from all over the world. So it is fitting that Shanghai is hosting the main inaugural event of this new UN observance. The theme of this first World Cities Day -- “Leading Urban Transformations” -- highlights the pioneering power of cities. In a world where already over half the population lives in urban areas, the human future is largely an urban future. As we reflect on our urban future, let us seize all the opportunities cities offer to create a new and transformative urban agenda.
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.

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.