

Media Update

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Seminar on Climate Change: Issues, challenges and opportunities confronting the peasants and farmer communities of Sindh Province

Hyderabad (ILO News), 10th September: Experts warn that lives and livelihoods of the rural folks in Sindh will experience further adversities if timely adaptation and mitigation measures are not taken to arrest the impacts of climate change. They further warned that food security and on-farm employment opportunities will dramatically shrink and resultantly there would be a wide ranging psycho-social disruptions. This message was conveyed during a seminar on 'Climate Change: Issues, challenges and opportunities for the landless peasants and farmer communities', organized by Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Women at the Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam on 9 September, 2015. The seminar was delivered under the auspices of One-UN Livelihood Restoration Project (LRP) funded by the United Nations Trust Fund on Human Security (UNTFHS). Peasant women, University faculty, researchers, relevant government functionaries, civil society activists and university students participated in the seminar.

In his inaugural remarks the Sindh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor Dr Mujibuddin Memon Sehrai, stated that the frequent floods and droughts have worsened the lives of the landless peasants and farmer communities of Sindh and all the climate models project accelerated vulnerability occurring in the future; thus there is an urgent need for multiple actions to address the threats. He further stated that the poorest people were paying the cost of both-their being vulnerable and more importantly the negligence of the state

institutions. He called for an immediate and integrated strategy to convert the challenges into opportunities and offered his University's support to host the knowledge hub on the subject in the Sindh province and also participate in adaptive research.

Mr. Abid Niaz Khan, National Project Coordinator, ILO, in his address shared that Pakistan ranked 146 out of 186 countries on the Human Development Index and 123 out of 160 countries on the Gender Development Index, while the Head Count Poverty Index had categorized 31 percent of Sindh's population living below the poverty line. Only one third of the Sindh's population is employed and female labour participation rate in the province is only 11 percent. The recurrent disasters since 2005 inflicted a huge human and financial loss to communities in Sindh with a minimum monetized value of losses to agriculture and livestock totalling plus 7 billion dollars. Climate change is therefore adding layers of vulnerability to the lives and livelihoods of the poorest communities of Sindh. He pinned the hope that government and the policy makers will bank on the good practices generated by the LRP, whereby the livelihood resilience of vulnerable populations was increased through livelihood diversification methodologies.

Muhammad Arif Goheer, Principal Scientist at the Global Change Impact Study Centre (GCISC), shared the scientific knowledge produced on the subject by his centre. He warned that temperature in the southern parts of Pakistan will gradually rise by 5.1 degree Celsius by 2085, thus creating erratic and unpredictable rainfall, increasing variability of monsoons, changes in river flow (irrigation water), severe water shortage in arid and semiarid areas and increased frequency of extreme climate events, such as floods, droughts, heat waves, cold waves etc. Agriculture productivity would resultantly shrink by 21.5 percent. Mr. Toseef Alam, Former-Chief Meteorologist also spoke about the increased occurrence of extreme weather events and their impacts on the province of Sindh. He said that Pakistan is disproportionally witnessing a higher increase in temperature compared with the global average, although Pakistan contributes less than 1 percent to greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Alfredo Lazarte Hoyle, Co-lead, Area of Critical Importance on Decent Work in the Rural Economy, Rural and Local Economy, Employment Policy Department, ILO HQ Geneva; highlighted that promoting employment and social protection policies and social dialogue and ensuring that climate change adaptation for vulnerable economic sectors is a policy priority based on strong institutional mechanisms. He also shared examples of ILO's

international contributions towards mitigating the climate change challenges, promoting green jobs and promoting social protection through Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), Social Finance Programme (SFP) and multi-national enterprises engagement programmes (ENT). He also shared the details of knowledge and tools produced on the subject by the ILO.

Former Chief Economist Sindh Ghulam Mustafa Abro and Muhammad Ali Shah Chairperson, Pakistan Fisher Folks Forum emphasized the need for serious and urgent actions aimed both at promoting adaptation and the mitigation simultaneously. Sindh University Professor Ismail Kumbhar and Educationist Murtaza Dharejo spoke on behalf of the academia, while senior journalist Ishaq Mangrio and Suhail sangi represented the views of the media on this important topic. Ms. Zahida Detho of Sindh Rural Partner Organisation (SRPO), Sikandar Brohi, Executive director Participatory Development Initiative (PDI) and Qalandar Shah Lakiary spoke on the behalf of the civil society and they all reflected upon the posed challenges to the very survival of Sindhi communities and the need for averting those challenges through timely and appropriate actions.

The seminar ended with vote of thanks by ILO, FAO and UN-Women.

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