

Media Update

16 November 2016

UNICEF

Press Release

World Prematurity Day Reduction in Preterm Births & Child Deaths Imperative to Achieve Global Goal for Health & Well Being

Islamabad - 16 November 2016: Pakistan will observe the 6th annual World Prematurity Day tomorrow, to reaffirm its commitment towards reducing the number of preterm births in the country. According to an estimate, 860,000 premature births are recorded each year in Pakistan of which nearly 102,000 children die due to related complications, says UNICEF.

Globally, fifteen million babies are born before time each year and over 1 million children die before their fifth birthday. Pakistan is ranked second among the top ten countries that account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths from preterm birth complications. Without a major push to reduce these deaths, it will not be possible to reach the Sustainable Global Goal, endorsed by 193 countries, to end all preventable newborn and child deaths by 2030.

The World Prematurity Day 2016 will highlight innovations that show the most promise in transforming the prevention, diagnosis, and management of preterm birth. While it provides an opportunity to call attention to the heavy burden of death and disability when a child is born too soon, it is also a chance to talk about solutions.

“The number of preterm births in Pakistan must be reduced, as these are one of the leading causes of death for children under five years of age. UNICEF in partnership with the Government of Pakistan is supporting efforts to reduce child morbidity and mortality. One example of our most recent initiatives is the establishment of a Kangaroo Mother Care model at a public hospital in Lahore where special care is provided to the preterm newborns. Kangaroo



Mother Care is a technique used to keep the new-born warm and support breast feeding.”

“Good hygiene care can help prevent multiple infections while early initiation of breast feeding within the first hour can particularly help prevent deaths. The facility will also serve as a training resource centre to build the capacity of other Health Care providers and scale up similar initiatives in other provinces,” she adds.

UNICEF emphasises that premature births and child deaths can be achieved by strengthening health policies and services as well as improving access and care for mothers and new-borns. Although notable achievements have been made in the health sector, a lot more is needed in terms of the quality of care for women and new-borns.

An important aspect of prevention of preterm birth is adequate maternal nutrition which is critical for foetal development. Women with low Body Mass Index or low pregnancy weight gain are at increased risk for preterm birth. There are other proven low-cost interventions that are especially effective for preterm babies.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

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WFP

Press Release

AUSTRALIA BOOSTS GIRLS' LITERACY THROUGH WFP EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN FATA

ISLAMABAD, 16 Nov: The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a three-year, contribution of AU\$6 million (approximately US\$4.5 million) from the Australian Government for an education programme in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Frontier Regions (FR).

“We are very grateful to the people and Government of Australia for this contribution. The flexibility of this donation has allowed WFP to address the critical education needs in FATA and FR particularly for the returnee communities,” said WFP Country Director ad interim Stephen Gluning. “There are alarming rates of illiteracy owing to high school drop-out rates among children, especially adolescent school girls. By providing extra incentives for parents to send girls to school, we can take a step towards women’s empowerment.”

Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Margaret Adamson said Australia had a long-standing history of working with the Government of Pakistan to provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by crisis. “Since 2010 Australia has provided more than AUD 95 million in humanitarian assistance to Pakistan, in partnership with the WFP, to support the victims of earthquakes, floods and displacement. Australia’s assistance has also helped provide nutrition to acute malnourished women and children, livelihood support and school feeding programmes,” High Commissioner Adamson said.

Under the programme, WFP will provide over 312,000 children with a mid-morning snack of High Energy Biscuits (HEBs) during the school day in 7 FATA agencies and 6 frontier regions. Providing children with snacks at school has proven to significantly increase children’s enrolment and retention rates in WFP assisted primary schools of FATA. Furthermore, WFP gives a monthly supply of vegetable oil fortified with Vitamins A and D to primary grade students who attend class regularly, as an extra incentive for parents to send children to school. The Australian contribution will be used for food-



based assistance in the first year, while cash-based assistance will be added in the subsequent two years. Between 13,000 to 15,000 adolescent school girls will receive cash assistance – which can be used for school meals – instead of food-based assistance. These are strong incentives for parents to send their children, especially their daughters, to school which helps to improve the long-term prosperity of these children.

The underlying aim of cash grants is to increase and ensure the retention of girls in schools and thus, contribute to an increase in women's literacy rate in FATA. With an overall literacy rate of 33.3%^[1], (national average 58%, 2013-14), and an adult literacy rate of 28.4% (national average 57%), education indicators in FATA are not only far below the national average, but place FATA among one of the least literate areas of the world. Improving girl's access to education has been shown to prevent early marriage and teenage pregnancy, as well as increasing lifetime income opportunities and improving the health of future children.

For his part, the Honorable Minister of States and Frontier Regions, His Excellency Abdul Qadir Baloch commended the support of WFP and said “the Government of Pakistan extends its gratitude to the Australian Government for its unshrinking support.”

Through this programme – which was designed according to government priorities – WFP also aims to build on existing global and regional models that use cash to support girls' education, thus building government's capacity to mainstream such programmes in their development planning in the long run for their ownership and facilitating the future handover of the project. WFP has also supported the Government and lead UN Agencies in the rollout of Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” in Pakistan. To the possible extent, WFP's education programme is integrated with teacher training, nutrition and water and sanitation interventions implemented by WFP's partners, particularly UNICEF and UNESCO.

In 2016, Australia has contributed US\$ 9 million to WFP programmes, placing it in the top five donors to WFP Pakistan.

WFP has been implementing education programmes in FATA since 2008.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. Each year, WFP assists some 80 million people in 80 countries.

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