

Media Update

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UNICEF

Press Release

Workshop on Countering Child Abuse Inaugurated in Islamabad

Islamabad – 13 March 2018. A two-day national workshop on countering the menace of child abuse was inaugurated here today, bringing together key stakeholders from across the country to discuss and commit to a clear roadmap for the establishment of responsive and coordinated child protection systems.

Hosted by the Government of Balochistan, in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Inception Workshop on *Child Protection Case Management and Referral System in Pakistan*, is the first of its kind being held to recommend ways and means to effectively counter the issue of child abuse in the country.

The inauguration session was chaired by the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, National History and Literary Heritage, Marriyum Aurangzeb, who is also the chairperson of the Parliamentary Special Committee on Child Abuse.

"It is very important that we work collectively to raise awareness amongst communities, especially the vulnerable and those devoid of technology or infrastructure, so that they have the confidence to report cases of child abuse. It is heartening to note that Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan have taken the initiative to address social challenges with support from international partners. I would like to thank all international partners such as DFID and UNICEF, who have been continuously helping Pakistan by giving us technical support and the review of international best practices in Child Protection."

"As part of its corporate social responsibility, I would like to emphasise that media has a very important role not only to highlight an episode or an event



but more importantly to address the prevention side of such incidence. International partners can help the federal and provincial governments to develop awareness raising material on child protection for media to broadcast and publish,” she added.

Balochistan is the only province to have enacted child protection legislation which is completely aligned with the minimum standards set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a process that was technically supported by UNICEF. Likewise, the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan has recently approved a Child Protection Bill which is also fully aligned with the UNCRC. The other provinces are likely to follow suit given the political will and commitment exhibited by their respective governments to tackle the social evil of child abuse.

Speaker of the Balochistan assembly, Raheela Durrani said, “I must acknowledge that in Balochistan, a major change came through in the domain of child protection with the introduction of the child protection act in November 2016. The act is the first ever child protection specific legislation completely aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I am very pleased with the holding of this workshop as it addresses the practical aspects of what has been agreed upon as the course of action for saving our children from all sorts of threats that endanger them including all forms of violence and exploitation.”

The objective of the workshop as highlighted by the speakers is to support the creation and strengthening of a protective environment for children in Pakistan, primarily through adopting a systems approach to tackle the issue and gain a common understanding of how the systems should operate. The speakers emphasized that Pakistan surely needs to break new ground and set itself as a regional leader in establishing a public coordinated child protection case management and referral system to prevent and respond to cases of child abuse.

The Deputy Speaker of the Gilgit Baltistan Assembly, Jaffarullah Khan said, “A nations greatness can be judged by the way it treats its children. Like other provinces, Gilgit Baltistan is also facing the issues related to the rights of the child. Therefore, we have taken some initiatives which include the approval of the child protection response bill 2017. It will be enacted soon.”

The first day of the workshop was dedicated to an overview of best practices in child protection, both globally and nationally, with a specific reference to

creating optimal coordination systems. The second day will comprise participatory technical sessions, targeted towards the teams from Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, to pave the way for implementation of their respective child protection legislative frameworks by finalizing the way forward which is specific and time-bound.

DFID is supporting the Government of Pakistan through technical assistance of UNICEF to strengthen public child protection service delivery particularly to protect children in the country from abuse.

Speaking on the occasion, Séamus Mac Róibín, Senior Social Development Adviser, DFID said, “We owe it to the children of Pakistan, to our moral conscience and to the future generations, to leave behind a country in which every child is protected from violence.”

UNICEF Pakistan Country Office provides technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan with regard to its national and international obligations on child rights. This workshop marks a critical step forward in engaging technically with provincial governments on legislative reforms aimed at strengthening the right of a child to protection, thus supporting establishment of child protection case management and referral systems to prevent and respond to child abuse.

“Child Protection needs our immediate attention,” said Cristian Munduate, the Deputy Representative of UNICEF Pakistan. “Pakistan ratified the United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC) in 1990, thereby undertaking a specific commitment to promote and protect the rights of all children in the country. Among other rights of survival, development, participation, a child has a specific ‘right to protection’ – whereby Pakistan is obligated, inter alia, to ensure that children within the State are protected from all forms of violence, neglect and exploitation, collectively known as ‘child abuse’, be it within a family environment or otherwise.”

The Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), Justice (Retd.) Ali Nawaz Chowhan also addressed the gathering and said, “With the recurring incidence of child abuse, one can see the importance of this workshop. We need a concerted effort as we see the children being exploited and abused in the country. This is very unfortunate. It falls on the civil society and organisations such as UNICEF to take up the leadership of a big movement for the protection of our children and NCHR will fully support it.”

From the Federal Government, the workshop is being attended by members of the Parliamentary Special Committee on Child Abuse, senior officials of the Federal Ombudsman's Office and the Ministry of Human Rights as well as the members of the National Commission for Human Rights.

Provincial parliamentarians from Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, Secretaries of the Social Welfare Departments, members of the Child Protection Commission Balochistan including the relevant line ministries and the civil society are also attending the workshop.

For further information, please contact:

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