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991 Photo album
The sixth issue of the United Nations Pakistan magazine for 2017 focuses on United Nations efforts towards achieving human rights, the foundation of peaceful societies and sustainable development. The commemoration of Human Rights Day on 10 December marked the beginning of a year-long celebration of seven decades since the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights, of which Pakistan was one of the first signatories.

This issue has a range of messages on the importance of human rights from the UN system, government and member states. It will also highlight activities undertaken to observe the occasion, such as the third edition of the ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’ Film Festival jointly organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, the Embassies and High Commissions of Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, the European Union, Goethe Institute, and the United Nations. This year, the festival brought some 25 films and documentaries from all over the world focusing on topics including migration, refugees, freedom of expression, child abuse, human trafficking, drug abuse, people living with disabilities, rights of transgender people, violence against women, peace building, and the death penalty, among many others. It showed both the challenges all countries face, and the accomplishments.

Three short documentaries jointly produced by young Pakistani and Afghan filmmakers during a training session in July were also screened: Bahaali, Sound of Silence and Transgenders in Pakistan, focused on drug abuse in children, persons with disabilities and transgenders’ rights. The powerful medium of film, and the collaboration among filmmakers of different countries brings people closer and allows an understanding of the common human rights issues around the world.

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December 1 was World AIDS Day, so this issue focuses on UN activities aimed at increasing awareness, fighting stigma and discrimination, and educating people regarding HIV. With an estimated 133,179 People Living with HIV (PLHIV) Pakistan harbors more than one third of the estimated HIV Positive population in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, but is on board the fast-track programme to eradicate the disease by 2030. The theme of this year’s day was ‘Right to Health’: only by placing human rights at the centre of global health can we ensure that health care is accessible, acceptable, available and of good quality for everyone, leaving no one behind.

In this issue, we also share information on several development activities undertaken by different UN agencies in the areas of climate change, refugees, drug and crime prevention, gender equality, and education. In addition, a number of important UN observances were commemorated in the past months, including World Prematurity Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Migrants Day, and the International Day for Tolerance. This edition includes stories about our activities to promote these days, and our efforts to achieve the SDGs behind them.

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the UN Communications Group and the UN Country Team for their continued support for this magazine, and for their collective work on communication to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Pakistan.

Neil Buhne
Resident Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan and Acting Director, UNIC
Secretary-General’s message on Human Rights Day

This year’s commemoration of Human Rights Day marks the beginning of a year-long celebration of seven decades since the adoption of one of the world’s most profound and far-reaching international agreements. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the equality and dignity of every human being and stipulates that every government has a core duty to enable all people to enjoy all their inalienable rights and freedoms. All of us have a right to speak freely and participate in decisions that affect our lives. We all have a right to live free from all forms of discrimination. We have a right to education, health care, economic opportunities and a decent standard of living. We have rights to privacy and justice. These rights are relevant to all of us, every day. They are the foundation of peaceful societies and sustainable development.

Since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration in 1948, human rights have been one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with peace and development. While human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted, the Declaration has helped countless people to gain greater freedom and security. It has helped to prevent violations, obtain justice for wrongs, and strengthen national and international human rights laws and safeguards. Despite these advances, the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration are being tested in all regions. We see rising hostility towards human rights and those who defend them by people who want to profit from exploitation and division. We see hatred, intolerance, atrocities and other crimes. These actions imperil us all.

On this Human Rights Day, I want to acknowledge the brave human rights defenders and advocates, including UN staff, who work every day, sometimes in grave peril, to uphold human rights around the world. I urge people and leaders everywhere to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – and for the values that underpin our hopes for a fairer, safer and better world for all.

"As we enter the 70th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration, it is right that we should honour its achievements and pay tribute to its inspired architects. At the same time, we should be under no illusions: the legacy of the Universal Declaration is facing threats on many fronts. If we let our commitment to uphold human rights drift – if we turn aside when they are abused – they will slowly shrivel and die. If that happens, the cost in human life and misery will be immense, and the whole of humanity will pay a heavy price."

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein
The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
focus on

conferred by this Chapter (Fundamental Rights) shall, to the extent of such inconsistency be void”.

Pakistan has ratified Core Human Rights Conventions and is signatory to CEDAW and the SDGS. The Government attaches high priority to advancing the mutually reinforcing objectives of development, human rights, and democracy and is working hard to implement its international commitments through Treaty Implementation Cells that have been set up at all Federal and Provincial levels. Pakistan continues to regularly report to the relevant Treaty Bodies on the implementation of conventions signed. Since May 2016, five periodic reports have been prepared and defended by the Ministry of Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights empowers all persons and is relevant to all of us, each day. Equality, justice and freedom prevent violence and sustain peace for all. The Ministry of Human Rights is mandated to uphold and protect human rights in the country. It works to give a new and holistic human rights perspective to governance structures and institutions. The National Action Plan for Human Rights is an ambitious program for the advancement of human rights in all spheres. The comprehensive plan consists of six thematic areas with 16 expected outcomes and 60 actions. The six thematic areas which cover all human rights dimensions include: (a) Policy, Legal Reforms; (b) Access to Justice; (c) Implement Key Human Rights priorities; (d) International/UN Treaty implementation; (e) Establish and strengthen national human rights institutions; and (f) Implement and Monitor mechanism for the Action Plan.

The Ministry also operates legal support services for persons in need. This includes a helpline for legal advice and the establishment of an Endowment Fund for free Legal Aid. A women’s shelter in Islamabad also provides protection, shelter and psychological aid to women in distress and under threat. Pakistan’s election as member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-20 is an endorsement of our effort and hard work. The promotion and protection of human rights, however, is a continuous process and faces many challenges. These can nevertheless be overcome if strong linkages are developed between all stakeholders, government, civil society, judiciary and the legislature. Cooperation and dialogue are the pillars for progress for human beings and Planet Earth. It is only through tolerance, understanding, open-mindedness that we can make a better co-existent world truly reflective of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rabiya Javeri Agha
Secretary, Ministry of Human Rights

Human Rights Day recognizes the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of the inherent dignity and inalienable human rights of all persons in the world. Pakistan was one of the first signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A founding member of the Human Rights Council, it has worked hard in the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. The words of the Founding Father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, are the guiding principle of our policy: “We are equal citizens of one State”.

The Constitution of Pakistan is the primary source of protection of fundamental rights. Article 8 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Any law, or any custom or usage having force of law, in so far as it is inconsistent with the rights

Advancing the objectives of development, human rights, and democracy
The UN and Human Rights in Pakistan

Written in 1945, among the first words in the UN Charter are: “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”. Three years later the Universal Declaration of Human Right said: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Seventy years later, in 2015 world leaders agreed to Agenda 2030, which says: “We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity”.

Therefore, it is clear, that from the beginning of the UN up to today, the promotion and protection of human rights has been and continues to be key to its purpose, and is essential if there is to be sustainable development, and for no one nor one country to be left behind. Moreover, this framework means that human rights ensure additional protection for vulnerable groups such as women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities, migrants or refugees.

For Pakistan, as for the UN, human rights are an integral concept, and have been from their creation, through joining the United Nations in 1947, being an original signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to such rights being enshrined in the Constitution and being implemented through development programmes, including to meet the SDGs. The achievements on human rights protection and promotion in Pakistan include an unprecedented number of laws being passed in recent years, as well as the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women. The 18th constitutional amendment has not only led to greater provincial autonomy in decision-making but also to more direct accountability mechanisms between rights-holders and duty-bearers at the provincial level.

The international human rights mechanisms in place are ones that Pakistan has actively supported, participated in, and sometimes co-founded. Pakistan is a founding member of the Geneva-based Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review, a unique peer review process of every member states’ human rights record. Over the last year Pakistan has been among the most active participants in this review process by submitting its own reports to the Council and by issuing recommendations on human rights challenges to other member states. In its pledge to rejoin the Human Rights Council as a member in 2018, Pakistan said that it will “take bold measures both in policy and legal reform and, where necessary, by undertaking effective
enforcement of its existing legislation and policy on human rights. Overall, we will further strengthen the holistic approach on human rights with primary focus of future interventions on women, children, minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable segments of society.” This is reflected in Pakistan ratifying seven international core human rights treaties, and voluntarily committing to their implementation.

As part of the United Nations family, UN funds, agencies and programmes have the responsibility to execute their mandate within the framework of the UN’s statutory goals stipulated by the charter: advancement of peace and security, development, and human rights. Our work as a UN country team is to support and strengthen the capacity of our Pakistani partners to meet their commitments, in line with the country’s development goals, the principles stemming from the Constitution of Pakistan and the UN Charter. Given Pakistan’s active engagement with the international human rights processes, the UN’s attention to human rights corresponds with the needs and requests of the government of Pakistan. And while it is the primary obligation of any state to realize human rights, the UN has been consistently working for many years in supporting Pakistan to meet these obligations.

While the UN’s contribution to protecting and promoting human rights is a normative responsibility it is also an essential means for helping countries to meet the sustainable development goals. Evidence confirms that integrating rights into development programming helps achieve better, more effective and sustainable development results. This is reflected in how the Sustainable Development Goals, are closely aligned with specific human rights. They call for sustainable and equitable development that focuses on people, reaches the most marginalized, and leaves no one behind.

As shown in this magazine, the United Nations family in Pakistan works in a wide variety of ways to support the government in helping human rights to be observed and to contribute to sustainable development. This is done through integrating, addressing and promoting human rights in our day-to-day work. Many UN entities are also mandated to improve specific sets of human rights and the rights of particular groups. For example, UN Women works to promote gender equality and women’s rights, UNICEF works to protect the rights of children in Pakistan, and UNAIDS works to promote human rights-based responses to HIV and AIDS and to address human rights violations that increase vulnerability to HIV. ILO focuses on labour rights, whilst UNHCR works to protect refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons, and UNDP aims to support human rights for development and national accountability mechanisms by providing technical and capacity building assistance to Pakistan’s national human rights system and supporting governments’ work on the rule of law.

With human rights at the core of our mandate and part of our day-to-day work, the United Nations family is deeply committed to support Pakistan’s own efforts to ensure that the full range of human rights can be enjoyed by everyone in Pakistan.

Neil Buhne
Resident Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan
The third edition of the film festival ‘Human Rights Through Cinematography 2017’ was inaugurated on 23 November at the Embassy of Switzerland in Islamabad with the screening of the film ‘Impasse’. The film highlights the issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Directed by Elise Shubs in Switzerland, the documentary sheds light on the lives of women, mostly migrants and mothers, when trapped in human trafficking networks.

H.E Thomas Kolly, Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan, and Luis Enrique Calzada, Executive Officer, Department of Public Information, UN Headquarters New York, formally inaugurated the film festival and highlighted its objectives and role of cinematography in raising awareness about human rights issues around the world.

After the screening, a panel of human rights experts including Davide Tarzi, Chief of Mission of IOM, César Guedes, Representative of UNODC, Romina Khursheed Alam, Member National Assembly, and Rukshanda Naz, Executive Director Legal Aid and Awareness Services, interacted with the participants and discussed the issues of human trafficking, stressing the need to protect people from falling into the situations of exploitation and violations of human rights. Kaneez Fatima Kassim, a senior development expert moderated the panel discussion.

Building on the success of the past two editions in 2015 and 2016, the festival brought this year some 25 films and documentaries from all over the world focusing on topics including migration, refugees, freedom of expression, child abuse, human trafficking, drug abuse, people living with disabilities, rights of transgender people, violence against women, peace building, and the death penalty, among many others.

Started on 23 November, screenings were held in several locations, including many universities across the country, such as: University of Gujrat; the Institute of Business Administration; the Institute of Business Management and Habib University in Karachi; the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, the International Islamic University and the Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad; the National College of Arts and the University of the Punjab in Lahore; the Bahaudin Zakariya University in Multan; the University of Peshawar; and the University of Balochistan in Quetta; Arid and Agriculture University, and Fatima Jinnah Women University in Rawalpindi.

The film festival was organized in partnership with Embassies and High Commissions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the European Union, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and with the International Film Festival and Forum of Human Rights, the Goethe-Institute, Pakistan National Council of Arts and the UN information Centre, Islamabad.
Pakistan’s economy is largely integrated into major global supply chains presenting a continued challenge for the creation of decent work for the 60 million workers that constitute the country’s labour force. The United Nations in Pakistan through its specialised agency, International Labour Organization (ILO) has been working consistently to address labour protection in order to uphold the human rights of Pakistan’s workforce within the normative framework of International Labour Standards. These efforts have borne fruit within the context of devolution, Pakistan’s GSP Plus status as well as the 2030 global development agenda. Of note has been the pace of labour legislative reform at provincial level with three out of four provinces (i.e. Punjab, Sindh and KP) enacting laws that seek enforce fundamental principles and rights at work. Like most developing country’s Pakistan’s labour force is largely informal (i.e. 70%) characterised by home based, domestic, migrant and agricultural workers as well as a large contingent of young women and men seeking prospects for stable employment. The absence of rights at work, sustainable employment, social dialogue and protection hinders the attainment of work in freedom, equity, security, and human dignity i.e. decent work which is widely recognised as a human right. This state of affairs has prompted tripartite dialogue among Government, Workers and Employer Organizations on the need to ratify those conventions that enhance the delivery of workers’ rights (e.g. the Convention on Home Work, C177 and that on Domestic Workers, C189).

Parallel to this, public policy actions have been pursued to facilitate the gradual formalization of the informal economy. For example, with the technical and financial support of the UN, Sindh and Punjab Home-Based Workers (HBW) Policies and Punjab’s Domestic Workers (DW) Policy were approved between 2016 and 2017. The establishment of the Sindh Agriculture and Fisheries Workers Union (SAFWU) and the Domestic Workers Union in 2015, also give credence to the recognition of informal economy workers who contribute 60% to the country’s GDP. Such efforts should be lauded as inspiration for other informal workers to unionise and claim their rights. Workers’ rights in Sindh also gained mileage in late 2017 when the Sindh Occupational Safety and Health Bill 2017 was unanimously passed through its provincial Assembly making provisions for occupational safety and health conditions at all workplaces. Motivated by, among other factors, GSP Plus, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) has been prompted to embark on the development of a National Labour Protection Framework (NLPF) which seeks to coordinate compliance within seven thematic areas highlighted by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). Under this framework, Child and Bonded Labour are prioritised as areas of immediate action as they are deterrents to the realization of workers’ rights and impinge on children’s rights. Government’s actions that address the phenomenon of child and bonded labour are firmly backed by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7 which calls for “immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour”. Of concern is the inertia to quantify the
scale of both Child and Bonded Labour in Pakistan. Thankfully, hope manifests itself in the efforts led by the GoP to strengthen the labour inspection regime, shifting the discourse from compliance to competitiveness in supply chains such as the textile and readymade garments sector as well as financial allocations at provincial level for labour related matters. These strides are backed by analytical research on the binding constraints to upholding labour rights which include the incidence of child and bonded labour, gender pay gap, union density rates and the general limitations in labour law enforcement. These efforts are being pursued in light of the eight fundamental labour standards ratified by Pakistan that form part of the GSP Plus scheme (Ref Text Box).

In response to the implementation of these core conventions, a consistent effort is being made to improve social dialogue through Tripartite and Provincial Tripartite Consultative Committees in line with the convention on tripartite consultation (C-144). Social dialogue also been extended to two regions of Pakistan i.e. Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) indicating a positive shift toward promoting industrial harmony for the realization of workers’ rights.

Given the ground swell on the pursuance of labour protection, challenges still persist. To avert a race to the bottom where labour rights are concerned, a balance between workers collectivization and a coordinated effort to ensure compliance with International Labour Standards is a necessary pre-requisite.

**Ingrid Christensen**
Country Director, ILO Pakistan

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**Fundamental Conventions**

The ILO’s Governing Body has identified eight Conventions as “fundamental”, covering subjects that are considered as fundamental principles and rights at work: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. These principles are also covered in the ILO’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998). As of December 2017, there are currently over 1,370 ratifications of these Conventions, representing 91.6 % of the possible number of ratifications. The objective is universal ratification of all the fundamental Conventions. The eight fundamental Conventions are:

1. **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No 87)**
2. **Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No 98)**
3. **Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No 29)**
4. **Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No 105)**
5. **Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No 138)**
6. **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No 182)**
7. **Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No 100)**
8. **Discrimination (Employment and Occupational) Convention, 1958 (No 111)**

In addition the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 was adopted in June 2014 by the governments, employers and workers at the ILO International Labour Conference, deciding to give new impetus to the global fight against forced labour, including trafficking in persons and slavery-like practices.

Migration has been a constant and vital phenomenon throughout human history that has shaped the world as we see it today. Contemporary trends show us people moving due to different reasons including, but not limited to, economic factors, climatic changes, and the peace and security situations in their places of origin. Irregular and particularly undocumented migrants are at risk of falling through a policy vacuum, which renders social security, basic health and education facilities inaccessible to them.

IOM’s mandate to address irregular migration and mixed flows is grounded in its Constitution, and the IOM strategy adopted in 2007. This strategy underlines the need to support “States, migrants and communities in addressing the challenges of irregular migration” and “to provide migration services in other emergency or post-crisis situations as appropriate and as relates to the needs of individuals, thereby contributing to their protection”. Within this normative framework, IOM liaises with its partners to directly assist vulnerable migrants and supports governments and other relevant actors in their response. IOM also provides support and services to improve the facilities established for irregular migrants, tracks displacement, and provides critical information to stranded migrants about their options for regular and safe migration.

Migrants who have not attained legal status but are in the process of temporary regularization need an environment that is conducive to the realization of their legal obligations in the host country. In this regard, IOM Pakistan has been supporting the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan in flow monitoring at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and has facilitated the voluntary return of 97,225 individuals to Afghanistan during 2017. For the undocumented Afghans still residing in Pakistan, IOM is supporting the government in the documentation exercise in a monitoring and advisory role, under which 665,495 applications for Afghan Citizen Cards (ACCs) have been submitted as of January 2nd, 2018.

As migration becomes a more complex and permanent process around the world in the wake of humanitarian crisis and globalization, IOM stands by its commitment to strengthen the policy and institutional framework on migration and to protect the human rights of irregular and undocumented migrants.

Davide Terzi
Chief of Mission, IOM Pakistan
Let children take charge

During my two years in Pakistan, I have travelled to many places in the country, meeting children in some of its most hard-to-reach areas. Everywhere, I’ve seen that Pakistan’s children have something in common. They share a light in their eyes – a light of love, kindness and hope for a bright future.

This hope lays a heavy responsibility upon us adults. It is our job to ensure that children have a perfect start in life, with easy and affordable access to health, education, protection and other services to help them achieve their full potential in life. Twenty-eight years ago, on 20 November 1989, the world came together to make that very pledge to children. The nations of the world signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in doing so, committed to protecting children’s rights. This date has since been celebrated as World Children’s Day.

Since that day, we have come a long way towards building a better future for children. Far fewer mothers and children die of preventable illnesses, and 28.5 million Pakistani children are enrolled in school. In 2016 alone, 2.3 million Pakistanis gained access to sanitation. In 2014, there were 306 cases of polio in Pakistan – so far, this year, there have only been five.

Yet there is still a long way to go before we achieve a world in which all children, no matter who they are, or where they live, have the chance to flourish. For this reason, it is time for adults to take a step back. And that’s why this year, on 20 November 2017, we are celebrating a day of action for children, led by children.

Around the world, children are today taking over the media, politics, business, sport, and entertainment. They are using this spotlight to speak about the challenges their generation faces, and to hold us all accountable. Today, children are here to remind us that each one of them has the right to survive and thrive. Yet in Pakistan, 55 out of every 1,000 children born die in their first month of life and half are chronically malnourished.

They ask us whether even the water they drink and the environment they live in is safe, when every year 91,000 Pakistani children die from pneumonia and 53,300 from diarrhoea: diseases linked to unsafe water and unsanitary practices such as defecating in the open.

Pakistan’s children point out that every girl and boy has a right to learn. They remind us that one should seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, yet 22.6 million of them remain out of school, 12.1 million of them girls. As they take over the spaces that are normally reserved for adults, Pakistan’s children ask us how we protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation. In my time in Pakistan, I have seen such questions in the faces of countless young girls and boys who are eager to learn and grow. If children are the future of a country, the answers to their questions define the shape of that future. It is time for adults to be held accountable for the world we create for our children.

But answering the questions children ask us requires more than just words. We need to act and we need to do it now. For example, we know that a full course of vaccinations gives protection from childhood killers such as measles and diphtheria. We have successful models that can help to ensure every child gets all needed vaccinations. In Pakistan’s historic struggle against polio, dedicated women and men went door to door, finding children who were continually missed by immunization programmes. This model can be used to deliver vaccines and other lifesaving services.

We can apply lessons learned in recent years: that children who go to preschool are more likely to stay in education and that families and neighbours can help bring all children, especially girls, to school. We can give children who miss out on education another chance to learn through alternative learning programmes. Universal birth registration gives every child an identity and access to protection, and we have seen how entire villages acting together with determination can end open defecation once and for all.

When every Pakistani girl and boy – regardless of religion, disability or ethnicity; whether they live in cities or the countryside, or are rich or poor – can look forward to a life of health, opportunity and well-being, every day will truly be World Children’s Day. If we build on the lessons and successes of recent years, we can bring this future within our grasp. We owe it to Pakistan’s children to act.

The leaders of the future are our leaders today, and they are ready to ask difficult questions. This is the day children take control.

Cristian Munduate
Representative a.i, UNICEF Pakistan
Documentaries by young Afghan and Pakistani filmmakers screened at the human rights film festival

The film festival ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’ screened three documentaries, jointly produced by young Pakistani and Afghan filmmakers during a documentary-makers training program on Human Rights and Peace-building held earlier this year.

The first-of-its-kind residential training, led by the award-winning journalists from Serbia, Sonja Ristic and Zoran ulafi, was held in partnership with the Embassy of Switzerland in Pakistan, Fondation Hirondelle, the Centre for Excellence in Journalism, International Film Festival, Forum of Human Rights and the United Nations Information Centre, Islamabad in July this year.

The training programme provided a unique opportunity to young Pakistani and Afghan documentary-makers to produce state-of-the-art documentaries and enhance dialogue and professional relations among each other. Documentary makers from both countries who took part in the training programme included: Nameera Ahmad, Kanzul Fatima Arif, Gulzar Nayani, Said Nazir, Tamana Ayazi’s, Mohammad Behroozian, Najiba Noori’s, and Sadeq Naseri.


‘Bahaali’ is a journey into the lives of two children who are recovering drug addicts but do not let their history of addiction define them. ‘Sound of Silence’ is the story of a 15-year-old girl who was born deaf. Through her story, the film explores the challenges faced by deaf people in Karachi and how they deal with them. ‘Transgender in Pakistan’ is a radio documentary that voices the concerns and struggles for employment of the transgender community in Pakistan.

Mr. Neil Buhne, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan and Acting Director, United Nations Information Centre, Islamabad appreciated the quality of work produced by the young filmmakers. He thanked all the partners for providing such an excellent training opportunity to produce these stunning documentaries on poignant issues within human lives, which are relevant not only for Pakistani and Afghan audiences, but also to other parts of the world.

Screenings were followed by a panel discussion with the filmmakers including Najeeba Noori from Bamian, Afghanistan, Kanzul Fatima Arif, from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and Said Nazir, Radio Journalist from Peshawar, Pakistan. They shared that film serves as a powerful medium with great impacts on society. They stressed that increasing collaboration among filmmakers of different countries could bring people closer and allow an understanding of the common human rights issues around the world.
World premiere of ‘The Sinner’ launched in Islamabad

The ‘Human Rights through Cinematography Film Festival 2017’ launched the world premiere of ‘The Sinner’ in collaboration with Spinning Head Films. The film was directed by Asim Rafiqui, an independent photojournalist, whose work has appeared in Time, Harpers, Newsweek and National Geographic, amongst others.

The story of the film is told by a retired state executioner, Masih Jan who recalled details of how executions are conducted in Pakistan and how they are often botched. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with the leading human rights defenders and experts from the government, civil society and United Nations. Speakers included: Shazia Marri, and Nafisa Shah. Members National Assembly, Kamran Raja, Director General Development, Ministry of Human Rights. Sarah Belal, Executive Director, Justice Project Pakistan and Christine Chung, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Speakers called for reduction in the number of offences calling for capital punishment and for strengthening the courts so that people will receive fair trials, free of torture and intimidation.

Christine Chung pointed out that executions are decreasing globally, and that the government of Pakistan has signed and ratified the International covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which asks to stop executions.

The event was jointly organized by the Justice Project Pakistan, United Nations Information Centre and the European Union.
Advancing fundamental human rights and ensuring that they are woven into the fabric of a society, underpins peace and prosperity for Australia, Pakistan and the world. Australia will join Pakistan as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the 2018-2020 term. The Human Rights Council is the world’s peak body for protecting human rights and the international rules based order. Australia’s election marks the first time a country from the Pacific region will be represented. We will therefore provide a unique Indo-Pacific perspective and ensure that the voices of our Pacific neighbours and other small states are heard. During our term, Australia will work to advance the rights of women and girls; promote good governance, democratic institutions and freedoms of expression, association, religion and belief; promote the rights of people with disabilities; advance human rights for indigenous peoples around the globe; promote national human rights institutions and capacity building; and, advocate the global abolition of the death penalty. These key priorities reflect our current engagement with the UN, the Government of Pakistan, and civil society concerning human rights in this country.

H.E Margaret Adamson
The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan

The High Commission of Canada in Pakistan was delighted to participate in the 2017 edition of “Human Rights through Cinematography”. Promoting respect for human rights is at the heart of Canada’s international engagement. It is also important for us domestically, and Canada is currently striving to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at home, particularly with respect to our Indigenous Peoples. Canada’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit have achieved great success in recent decades in using film to tell their stories, in their own voices. Filmmakers have long worked to promote the rights of Indigenous People in Canada and, in the process, have broadened our shared understanding of the diversity that defines our country. Movies and film festivals are important tools which help us to build a stronger, inclusive and just society. I encourage Pakistani filmmakers to continue telling the stories that matter – and that should matter – to the people of this country.

H.E Perry John Calderwood
The High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan

The European Union is proud to have been associated for the third time as a co-organiser of the ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’ festival in Pakistan. The featured films and documentaries demonstrate that human rights violations happen all around the world. Their universality is under attack and therefore there is a need to enhance their defense and awareness. The festival covered a wide range of human rights issues to which, whatever the context, one can often relate to, as a victim or as a defender, or both. Many movies also had a positive message where justice triumphs and rights are restored. We are thrilled by the response of the Pakistani audiences, especially from youth, to the festival and look forward to the fourth edition!

H.E Jean-François Cautain
The Ambassador of the European Union in Pakistan
The Netherlands Embassy is proud to have been an active contributor and supporter of the third edition of the Human Rights Film Festival in Pakistan. Cinematography is a very powerful tool, and an exciting way to bring across stories of people struggling, advocating, promoting and celebrating universal human rights. The images on the big screen stick with you, and it is unavoidable to identify with the main characters. Highlights for me were the movies talking about freedom of expression and investigative journalism. But also the movies about women rights and empowerment, in Pakistan and abroad. The international launch of the Pakistani documentary film ‘The Sinner’, about the death penalty, makes us reflect on the impact of a highly disturbing practice. And let us also not forget the documentaries on sexual identities and equal rights for all. All these themes and movies showed that not only people in Pakistan, but worldwide, in the North, East, West and South, are striving for implementation and protection of human rights. The film festival is a great way to have a peek into this world and learn something new. The Netherlands is proud to have supported this initiative, together with many other international and Pakistani partners. We look forward to the fourth edition in 2018!

H.E Ardi Stoios-Braken
The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Pakistan

This year’s Human Rights Day is very special. It marks the beginning of the year-long campaign that will end on December 10th 2018 with the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In that sense, several embassies and institution here in Pakistan, along with the European Union and the United Nations decided to launch the film festival on human rights called ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’.

The Embassy of Spain in Pakistan participates in this initiative by presenting the Spanish film: ‘Born in Syria’ by the Spanish director Herman Zin, which portrayed the plight of migrant children and highlighted shortcomings of all EU Member States in dealing properly with the refugees. While promoting human rights worldwide, we acknowledge that dysfunctions also exist in Europe and must be tackled. It is in that spirit that we allow ourselves to support and encourage Pakistan’s efforts in promoting and protecting human rights in its territory.

I would like to thank all colleagues who have contributed to this wonderful film festival and my very special gratitude to Vittorio Cammorota, the former Director of the UN Information Center for putting together this praiseworthy initiative.

H.E Carlos Morales Sánchez
The Ambassador of Spain in Pakistan
Respect for human rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination are fundamental values of Swiss society. These are firmly enshrined in the country’s legal and constitutional framework. Everyone should have equal opportunities to reach their full potential and to contribute towards social transformation and economic development to meet the global challenges our world faces today. While progress has been made, the violation of human rights is a consistent challenge and the international community needs to actively work for the implementation of human rights by strengthening the normative framework in multilateral forums such as the United Nations. Switzerland stands by its commitments and is proud to contribute towards promotion of human rights once again as a member of the ‘UN Human Rights Council’ for the period 2016-2018.

H.E Thomas Kolly
The Ambassador of Switzerland in Pakistan

70 years after the signature of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, our moment in history is unfortunately marked by a decline in respect for human rights and challenges to the very notion of universal human rights, all around the globe. But we need to stand strong, we need to unite, we need to create new visions for the future. Our Festivals, in Geneva and in Islamabad, not only show world-class documentaries, but are both observatories and relays for those who fight around the world in often difficult and dangerous territories to uphold the defense of human dignity. Thank you to the UN Information Center and its fantastic team in Islamabad who did an incredible work to organize this fully professional film Festival in six cities of Pakistan! We cannot wait to come back next year.

Isabelle Gattiker
Director, The International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights in Geneva
Film is one of the major and most powerful means to convey respect for human rights. The documentary films screened from November 23 to December 10, 2017 in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, UNIC and diplomatic missions were the right move to pay our respect to Human Rights Day.

The premiere of film “The Sinner” on death penalty, seen by a large audience, was the highlight of the event. The documentary screenings followed by discussions and ending up with a Q&A session added the required input both from the organizers and the audiences. Such events, through the power of film medium can not only inspire, but also lead to change for a better future.

Syed Jamal Shah
Director General, Pakistan National Council of the Arts, Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage, Islamabad.

Pakistan, like most other developing countries faces challenges regarding the protection of human rights. Prevalence of traditional social norms, weak political institutions and democratic structures are some of the causes for the country’s low compliance on human rights obligations. In this backdrop, efforts to raise awareness and generate debate around topics of human rights become all the more relevant. Raising awareness and sensitizing people and governments about their responsibilities towards human rights is a mission we all need to work on. Various means of information and communication are being used for this purpose. Among various forms of media, film has proved to be an amazingly powerful medium for not only sharing information but for raising awareness and shaping opinions on various issues and ideas. In recent years rights activists and campaigners have increasingly used the medium of films and documentary films to spread the message about human rights. The Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) had an enriching experience by screening documentary films on human rights themes to gatherings of young students from six universities across Pakistan. PODA is grateful to UNIC and the EU Delegation to Pakistan for their valuable support in organizing the events.

Kaukab Jehan
Executive Director, Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy
Running successfully country-wide from 23 November 2017, the ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’ film festival concluded on 10 December, marking Human Rights Day. The closing event was co-organized by the European Union, the United Nations and the Embassy of Switzerland.

This year, Human Rights Day kicks off a year-long campaign to mark the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being, regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. UDHR is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

On this occasion, the United Nations in Pakistan launched the Urdu and Pashto versions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Charter and Statute of the International Court of Justice in Urdu language.

Neil Buhne, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Pakistan and Acting Director UNIC in his opening remakes said that the Universal Declaration asks us to stand up for our own rights and those of others. He hoped that screenings of these films and translated versions of the UDHR and UN Charter in local languages will help Pakistani people, particularly youth, to deepen their understanding of their rights.

Jean-François Cautain, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan mentioned that Human Rights are violated all around the world. He stressed that human rights need to be cherished and defended.

Isabelle Gattiker, Director of the International Film Festival and forum on Human Rights in Geneva travelled to Pakistan to attend the closing ceremony, and iterated the pride in collaborating with the ‘Human Rights through Cinematography’ film festival in Pakistan, and the hope to continue working together for defending peace and human rights.

Thomas Kolly, Ambassador of Switzerland in Pakistan stated that the UDHR has set forth a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations, and is as relevant as it was in 1948, and that the Swiss political model and the core values embedded in its historical tradition and legal orders defend and promote the universality, the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights.

The screenings on Human Rights Day were followed by panel discussion on ‘Defending Human Rights in troubled times: Dignity and Adversity’.

Jan Figel, Special Envoy of the Eu-
The film festival was organized in partnership with Embassies and High Commissions of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the European Union, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and with the International Film Festival and Forum of Human Rights, the Goethe-Institute, the Pakistan National Council of Arts and the United Nations Information Centre in Islamabad.
In 2008 the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force. The Convention sets out a wide range of rights including, civil and political rights, the right to live in the community, participation and inclusion, education, health, employment and social protection, and United Nations SDG 3 ‘health and wellbeing’ advocating the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities. Combating stigma and discrimination requires a multi-sectoral approach, involving every one. Ministries, mental health service user representatives, organizations, family groups, health professionals, NGOs, academic institutions, professional organizations and other stakeholders should unify their efforts in educating and changing public attitudes towards mental illness and advocating for the human rights of people with mental disabilities.

Mental health policies and laws are inadequate in most countries of the world and yet they are critical to improving conditions for people with mental disabilities.

WHO defines mental health as a “state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." 450 million people around the world have mental, neurological or behavioural problems, yet the majority of these people don’t have access to appropriate mental health treatment and care. The incidence of human rights violations in mental health care across nations has been described as a “global emergency” and an "unresolved global crisis." The relationship between mental health and human rights is complex and bidirectional. Human rights violations can negatively impact mental health. Conversely, respecting human rights can improve mental health. Stigma associated with mental health also results in discrimination and human rights violations. All over the world people with mental disabilities face discrimination in the areas of employment, health, education, and housing, the right to vote, right to marry and have children. As recipients of mental health services, people with mental disabilities, as well as their families are most directly affected by issues related to mental health.

Workplace.

Organizations have a responsibility to support individuals with mental disorders in either continuing or returning to work. In particular, flexible hours, job-redesign, addressing negative workplace dynamics, and supportive and confidential communication with management can help people with mental disorders continue to or return to work.

The UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities is a new hope for rights protection.

Naima Hasan
Senior Stress Counsellor, UNDP Pakistan
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights entered the 70th year of its existence on 10 December 2017: International Human Rights Day.

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights in Geneva (FIFDH), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) joined forces to launch ‘Human Rights Film Tour’, an international tour spread over 45 countries including Zimbabwe, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Nigeria, Brazil, Cuba and Guatemala.

On the occasion, Geneva-based International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights’ (FIFDH) Director Isabelle Gattiker and filmmaker Juan José Lozano presented the documentary ‘Crime Hunters’ at Lok Virsa in Islamabad.

Swiss embassies all over the world will screen ‘Crime Hunters’ between 10 December 2017 and 10 December 2018, by organizing events based on the FIFDH’s ‘one film, one topic, one debate’ format: screenings which are followed by debates with local NGOs, journalists, students and activists.

Directed by Nicolas Wadimoff and Juan José Lozano, the film portrays a team of Swiss lawyers from an organization called TRIAL (Track Impunity Always) International. Their mission is to track down perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity who are hiding in Switzerland and to bring them to justice.
Helping communities to fight stunting

Gul Jan (27), a mother of four, expertly coaxes her youngest two-and-a-half year old daughter Ansa into eating a banana. This young mother, like many girls in her village (Jehan Khan in Kingri tehsil, Khaipur Mirs district) was deprived of her right to education and was married off as a child at the age of 13 to Imtiaz, a labourer 11 years her senior. At 14, she had already given birth to her first son. Little Ansa has not always been a healthy, happy fruit juggler. During her first year of life, she was a weak child with no appetite, and showed no signs of improving despite being taken to several doctors. Gul Jan’s early pregnancies and poor nutrition had a toll on her children’s health.

Ansa was born premature and had a low birth weight. She did not receive the essential colostrum: the mother’s first milk which helps to lay the foundation to a healthy immune system, through early initiation of breastfeeding. Instead, Ansa was fed honey, a mixture of dry fruits, formula milk and commercially available cereal supplements. She was also kept bereft of being exclusively breastfed during the first six months of her life, worsening her situation as time passed.

When Ansa was 18 months old, social mobilisers from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) came to Gul Jan’s village. They held separate sessions on nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) with men and women of the community. In this occasion, a social mobiliser identified that Ansa was suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

After check-ups at the UNICEF-supported Outpatient Therapeutic Programme centre in the local public hospital it emerged Ansa weighed less than 8 kilograms and had a mid-upper arm circumference of under 11.5 centimetres – both dangerous signs of a developing nutrition problem that could eventually lead to death if not treated in a timely manner.

Staff from UNICEF’s implementing partner ACF International (Action Against Hunger) recommended Gul Jan breastfeeding and semi-solid and solid foods – a practice called complementary feeding. Ansa was also given ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF). Cooking demonstrations were also organised for the community.

In parallel, Gul Jan also attended counselling sessions on hygiene and sanitation by Hands International, another of UNICEF’s partners in the programme. Their house, like many in her village, did not have a latrine, and a majority of villagers practiced open defecation. Gul Jan convinced her husband and her brother-in-law to build a latrine. This was part of a UNICEF-supported programme called ‘UN Maternal and Child Stunting Reduction Programme’. Funded generously by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the programme has a special focus on the first 1,000 days of a child’s life in three districts of the Sindh province, namely Ghotki, Khairpur and Nausheroz. On one hand, it addresses the immediate causes of undernutrition, emphasising actions to improve the nutritional status of children, mothers and pregnant and lactating women. On the other hand, in WASH-related activities, efforts are being made to maintain a safe, clean and secure supply of water, eliminate open defecation, and mobilise the communities to adopt standard hygiene practices. Together WASH and nutrition activities can prevent stunting.
Supporting the rural community through eco-friendly businesses

Mr. Siraj, a passionate marketeer-turned-environmentalist, started a solar lantern business in 2015. During a visit to a village in order to sell lanterns, he became aware of issues concerning water and flour mills, that lacked electricity and water and were often non-functional. At once he decided to invest and begin a project for these facilities, with the help of UNIDO/GEF’s Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP).

The project was a great opportunity for him to earn revenue and gain the confidence of people in terms of product reliability. The first step was to select the area and land, then, with the help of engineers he set up the project for Solar flour mills and Solar tube wells within the span of one month.

After project implementation, the hardship people faced due to lack of tube wells and power failures i.e. loss of water, loss of revenue, loss of crop yield, loss of time, and wastage of water, were finally eliminated. In fact yields increased due to availability of water, while the cost decreased through using clean, green and free energy, thus creating a positive impact socially, environmentally and economically.

Mr. Siraj suggests the most important aspect of his experience with the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme was the contribution to innovation that has given him a huge boost in terms of networking, exposure to various opportunities, and the help needed to sustain his idea. He says projects such as this one benefit individuals and communities, and are a guide towards a sustainable future. He has received the runner-up reward of GCIP 2017.

The Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP), a joint initiative of Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), is a program that empowers emerging startups to solve energy, environmental and economic problems using innovative and green technologies.
Landmark contribution from China enables to assist 158,000 people in Pakistan

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is grateful for a landmark contribution by China that will provide food and nutrition assistance to displaced people and returnee families in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

In its first ever contribution to WFP in Pakistan, China contributed US$1 million to enable WFP food assistance for 158,000 people in Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and Bannu districts of KP, in addition to North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand and Orakzai agencies in FATA.

WFP Pakistan's Country Director Finbarr Curran said China is an increasingly significant global player and a vital donor to WFP operations, and that WFP was pleased to partner with this donor in Pakistan in support of efforts to achieve food and nutrition security.

Thanks to China’s contribution, WFP will procure and distribute food assistance, which includes yellow split peas, iodized salt, vegetable oil and ‘Mamta’ – a nutritious supplementary food. In addition, 5,600 children between 6-59 months and pregnant and nursing mothers will receive six months of support to prevent malnutrition.

During a signing ceremony for the contribution, Lt. General Abdul Quadir Baloch, Federal Minister for the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) noted his appreciation for WFP’s work supporting displaced populations and returnee families, and extending his continued support for WFP operations in KP/FATA regions.

H.E. Yao Jing, the Ambassador of China to Pakistan, noted his appreciation for the Government of Pakistan’s role in supporting displaced populations and their return. He highlighted that the contribution will serve as an opportunity to begin a long-lasting partnership between WFP Pakistan and China.

Pakistan has been home to one of the largest refugee populations in the world in recent years. Since 2008, more than five million people have been displaced from FATA. While many have returned, as of June 2017 an estimated 300,000 people remain displaced and in need of assistance. The humanitarian situation in FATA continues to impede progress towards stabilizing food security in the region.
The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Pakistan is dedicated to improving the lives of returning families to the South Waziristan Agency of FATA, and helping them resettle to their normal lives. WFP identified an urgent need in the area, and along with their partner SRSP (Sarhad Rural Support Programme) and a generous donation by USAID Pakistan, took the initiative to address it.

The initiative involved rehabilitating an integral village link road in the area, to improve access to nearby schools, hospitals, grocery markets, agricultural fields as well as other villages. WFP conducted social mobilization in the Lagara Mazara village of South Waziristan Agency and gathered a total of 43 participants who rehabilitated the 2km long link road over the span of 15 days. The participants were provided with food baskets containing 80kg of wheat flour, 4.5kg of oil and 1kg of salt, which were delivered right to their doorstep.

The rehabilitated road is now facilitating the villagers’ access to nearby areas through better vehicle movement and lowered transportation costs. The road had been disrupted for the past 8 years, and is proving to be a source of social cohesion and unity among the local communities. Now the people in these communities can easily travel between the various villages, reach markets, and have easy access to hospitals and schools. The road will also provide access to other humanitarian actors looking to provide assistance to the people of these villages.
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) arranged a two-day workshop titled ‘Integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Agriculture and Natural Resources Management (ANR) for Provincial Planning’.

The workshop was instrumental in emphasizing to all stakeholders that the SDG targets can be achieved by developing a roadmap for the integration of Agriculture and Natural Resources Management SDGs into government planning, which consists of a series of measures needed to ensure a holistic, legitimate, and results-oriented mainstreaming and integration process.

The opening session on December 12 was chaired by the Additional Secretary, Planning and Development of FATA Muhammad Zubair, who in his remarks appreciated the efforts of FAO for arranging the workshop.

Welcoming the participants, Sanullah Khan, Officer-in-Charge of FAO KP-FATA programme highlighted the need to look into SDGs as a system and network where goals and targets are interlinked. He also pointed out the need for better coordination, policy coherence and synergies to achieve the SDG agenda effectively.

Officials from the FATA Secretariat, UN agencies, WFP, and Chairman Agriculture University Peshawar among others attended this workshop.

The Sustainable Development Goal to ‘End hunger, achieve food security, promote sustainable agriculture’ (SDG2) recognizes the inter-linkages among supporting sustainable agriculture, eradicating poverty and hunger are crucial in order to boost food production, agricultural productivity and rural incomes.
A Report on the evaluation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was presented at a workshop conducted for its stakeholders in Islamabad. This represents the first comprehensive, independent evaluation of FAO’s country programme in Pakistan.

Conducted with the support of FAO’s Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific (RAP) upon the request of the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, it aims at providing inputs to FAO Pakistan’s country office in order to better align the agency’s approach to the needs of Pakistan.

Sikander Hayat Khan Bosan, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, expressed satisfaction with the results of FAO’s evaluation report, stating that FAO has worked for improving food security of Pakistanis and improving livelihoods of the farming community. He also said that the results of the report, which are in line with the priorities of the Government, will lay the foundation for future programming work of FAO.

The evaluation supports FAO’s accountability to government and non-government partners, communities and resource partners in the country as well as member countries by assessing FAO’s contribution to achievement of its development goals.

Neil Buhne, UN Resident Coordinator; Masahiro Igarashi, Director of Office of Evaluation, FAO; Omar Awabdeh, Evaluation Officer FAO; Nasar Hayat, Assistant FAO Representative; members of UN Country Team, representatives from development partners and federal and provincial government departments participated in the workshop.

The evaluation report acknowledges FAO’s efforts to rise up to the challenges of rural poverty, low crop and livestock productivity, and displacement of FATA people through its various projects.

FAO’s women-focused activities in Sindh, Balochistan and FATA empowered vulnerable women by increasing their purchasing power, and contributed to improving their socio-economic status and increased nutritional status. FAO also contributed to the livelihoods of 124,021 families raising sheep and goats in the country by providing preventive vaccination, and controlling Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) outbreaks in the sheep and goat flocks of these families.

FAO’s approach to restoring agriculture-based livelihoods in FATA and flood-affected areas contributed to improved absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities.

This report is important in FAO’s transition from evaluation to identifying lines of emerging priorities in Pakistan. (Country Programming Framework 2018-2022). Appreciating the recommendations of the evaluation report, Mina Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan, said the agency would continue to support the Federal and Provincial Governments to improve livelihoods of farming communities in Pakistan.
Pakistan is classified as being extremely vulnerable to natural disasters as a result of its geographical location, the frequency of occurrence of natural disasters, and the number of affected people. The country has a wide variety of geological features including high mountain ranges, plains, deserts, and coastal areas. Pakistan is particularly prone to a range of natural disasters associated with these features, such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, storms, cyclones, tsunamis, avalanches, landslides and extreme temperature conditions.

A three-day training was held in Islamabad with the aim of helping participants grasp techniques for effective and timely Post-disaster Needs Assessment. Around 30 representatives from National Disaster Management Authority, Provincial Disaster Management Authorities, Gilgit Disaster Management Authority, FATA Disaster Management Authority, State Disaster Management Authority, PAK, Provincials Agriculture and Livestock Departments, WFP, IOM, UNDP, and International and National NGOs received the training.

Dominique Blariaux, Consultant DRM conducted the training, in which she emphasized the importance of coordination at the national and provincial level to improve the quality of baseline structure and harmonization of assessment tools, among other topics.

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) is a globally accepted methodology and detailed assessment process that provides comprehensive assessment of impacts of a disaster on sectors, and the needs for medium and long-term recovery planning. With the overarching aim to strengthen the Agriculture sector’s capacity for disaster risk management in Pakistan, creating a pool of Agriculture sector PDNA experts at federal, provincial and regional level is planned. The training will enable Disaster Management Authorities and major actors in the DRM sector to prepare this cadre of experts for the agriculture sector.
Development of plant genetic resources crucial for ensuring food security

By the year 2050, the amount of food required to feed the world population will be double that of the current requirements. The conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are key to ensuring that the world will produce enough food in the future.

With a growing population and dwindling land and water resources, there is an urgent need to understand the role and status of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Pakistan. A one-day seminar was organized at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) in Islamabad to highlight the importance of plant genetic resources, new crop variety development and their integration into the seed system.

Participants also learnt about the new national legislations, international agreements relevant to plant genetic resources in addition to variety protection and rights of plant breeders.

Appreciating the contribution of farmers, Mina Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan said the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture is important for Pakistan, since it aims at establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials. She added that the use of plant genetic resources is an integral element of an efficient seed certification system, and that FAO is supporting the Federal Seed Certification Department, the public and private sectors to develop capacity and technical expertise.

This consultative seminar brought together experts, policy makers, private sector representatives, academic researchers and relevant stakeholders to discuss related issues.

Yousaf Zafar, Chairman PARC urged the participants to make full use of the seminar to update themselves with the requirements of national and international law and to identify opportunities available for effective collaboration between the public and private sectors. He also said that the future of sustainable agriculture in Pakistan relies on seed purity and seed genetics.

This seminar was organized with the collaboration of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) and the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO-Pakistan).
The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Acting Country Director, Katrien Ghoos met with the honorable Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Iqbal Zafar Jagra and Additional Chief Secretaries for the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA Secretariat. During the meeting, Katrien Ghoos briefed the authorities on WFP’s upcoming transition programme – the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) which aims to support the Government of Pakistan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2 and 17) by 2030.

The transition will further align and strengthen the Government of Pakistan’s programmes and initiatives to achieve zero hunger through five Strategic Objectives (SOs).

The honorable Governor of KP appreciated WFP’s role in improving enrollment and retention of children in schools, nutrition and rebuilding livelihoods in returned areas of FATA. He also applauded WFP’s support towards girls’ education in Kurrum agency, FATA, and its stunting prevention and cash-based support programmes. He further extended the Government’s support to WFP for its programmes and interventions for the people of KP and FATA.
On World Tsunami Day, highly vulnerable Karachi schools conduct evacuation drills

Students, government officials, civil society organizations and UN agencies came together today to commemorate World Tsunami Day (officially celebrated on 5 November) by holding a tsunami school evacuation drill and cleaning the shoreline near their settlements. Supported by a regional United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project to improve preparedness for tsunamis in 18 countries, this is part of five school-based awareness trainings and evacuations in Karachi’s vulnerable coastal areas.

Ignacio Artaza, UNDP Country Director said Pakistan’s coastal areas are extremely vulnerable to tsunamis due to the earthquake-prone Makran Subduction Zone, just 100 km from the coast. Yet, 70 percent of Pakistan’s 1,046 km coastline lacks a suitable early warning system, and communities are largely unprepared.

In 1945, a tsunami killed 4,000 people along what was then a sparsely populated stretch from Gwadar to Karachi. Today, over 20 million people live in Karachi and 85,000 in Gwadar. Without preparedness and awareness, thousands of people along the coast are at risk if a tsunami hits. The devastating effects of a modern-day tsunami were demonstrated in 2004, when a tsunami in the eastern Indian Ocean killed about 230,000 people in Indonesia, Thailand and other vulnerable areas.

Today’s evacuation drill was conducted at a school in Rehri Goth, Karachi, to highlight the significance of school tsunami preparedness and its effectiveness in saving lives from tsunami risk. This is as part of UNDP’s efforts to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, a global initiative to work with local governments to make communities resilient against disasters. To highlight the importance of the environment in preparing for disaster, an event was also held where participants were joined by United Nations Volunteers in ‘Clean MY Shore’, a symbolic cleaning of the seashore.
Community based disaster management and school safety project implemented in Nasirabad District

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Community Based Disaster Management (CB-DRM) and School Safety project is being implemented by FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance Pakistan in Chattar and Tamboo Tehsils, Nasirabad District of Balochistan. A training session on school safety was organized on 25 September 2017 attended by around 40 male members of School Safety Management Committee from different schools.

The training aimed to provide information about school safety and to highlight the responsibilities of the School Management Committee (SMC). It consisted of multiple tasks including assignments, group activities and drills.

As a result of these school safety trainings and sessions, the School Safety Management Committee members are taking care of schools located in their respective areas. Abdul Ghafar, one of the participants from Village Maula Bux Chando School, Union Council Gola Wah, along with other community members, cleared off thorny bushes from the school surroundings to make a safer playing area for the children.

The children can now play easily in the clean area nearby the school without the fear of getting hurt. This is just one example of how trainings on ‘School Safety’, combined with community contributions, can not only instantly improve the lives of children, studying in the schools, but also prepare them to handle disasters in a better way.
Ensuring shock-responsive social protection

Pakistan has a longstanding history of delivering cash-based responses to emergencies. The post-earthquake housing programme, Citizen Damage Compensation Programme and the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) Temporarily Displaced Person (TDP) Programme are some of the laudable initiatives of the government. By leveraging the programmes, underlying systems and partnerships of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan can make a big leap towards developing shock-responsive social protection systems in the country. In doing so, the role of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and relevant stakeholders will be compelling. The World Food Programme (WFP) is working with BISP and NDMA to facilitate the government in having a shock-responsive social protection system in Pakistan. In this regards, a meeting was held at WFP office involving all relevant stakeholders and was attended by the Chairperson BISP, Marvi Memon; Member Operations NDMA, Brig Mukhtar Ahmed; and WFP acting Country Director, Katrien Ghoos.

During the meeting, the partners discussed different institutional and coordination mechanisms and the way forward to strengthen and scale up the social protection systems in response to shocks. WFP Acting Country Director, Katrien Ghoos, reiterated WFP’s support to the Government of Pakistan for strengthening shock-responsive social protection platforms in the country. She emphasized that both BISP and NDMA are key stakeholders in this area and these consultations would go a long way in reducing the vulnerabilities of disaster-affected populations in the country.

As a next step, the meeting participants agreed to establish a technical committee with the involvement of BISP, NDMA, WFP and relevant stakeholders to discuss the technical and operational aspects of making shock responsive social protection a reality in Pakistan.
Agreement to help strengthen Pakistan’s electoral processes

On 22 November, His Excellency, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Takashi Kurai, and the Country Director of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan, Ignacio Artaza signed an agreement to provide US$ 5.9 million over three years (2017–2020) to support the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and to further strengthen its capacity to hold elections. This project will build upon UNDP’s long-standing commitment to develop the capacity of key democratic institutions including provincial and national assemblies and the ECP itself.

H.E. the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan stated his belief that both the Election Commission and UNDP will play their role to make the upcoming election credible and transparent; which he said will surely be a great achievement of democracy and development for all people of Pakistan.

Ignacio Artaza said the long-standing partnership between UNDP, Japan and the ECP is instrumental in building a foundation for democratic governance and sustainable, inclusive development in Pakistan. With the generous funding from Japan, this project is intended to help build the institutional and technical capacity of the ECP to conduct credible and inclusive elections, enhance participation, especially by young voters and women, and work with UNESCO on building a media landscape in which election proceedings are covered accurately and objectively.

Babar Yaqoob Fateh Muhammad, Secretary, ECP suggested the ECP’s successful partnership with UNDP under its electoral assistance project continues to enhance the professional capacity of the Commission’s staff and election officials, in addition to further increasing transparency of the process through the use of modern technologies.

In the run-up to the 2018 general election, this project will train election officials and educate voters, in addition to support the ECP in modernizing the process through the use of technology. During the election itself, the project will assist in improving voting operations and results management.

Thereafter, support will shift towards strengthening sustainable electoral institutions. This contribution from Japan bolsters the existing support from UK Aid and USAID, thus allowing UNDP to build upon its on-going work to strengthen electoral and legislative processes in Pakistan.
New partnerships to support innovative means of increasing accountability

To mark Anti-Corruption Day celebrated on 9 December, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan initiated two new agreements to develop innovative solutions to end corruption and increase accountability. The agreements were signed by the Country Director, Ignacio Artaza, representing UNDP Pakistan, Fayyaz Yasin of Accountability Lab, and Syed Raza Ali of the Peace and Justice Network, respectively.

Ignacio Artaza stated that corruption and lack of accountability undermine countries’ efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG-16, to build peace, justice and strong institutions. Pakistan is no exception to this. Indeed, transparent, inclusive and accountable institutions are a pre-requisite for sustainable development that benefits the most vulnerable in every area, from health and education to economic prosperity and environmental protection.

Through the partnerships with Accountability Lab and the Peace and Justice Network, UNDP will work with the government to test innovative solutions to Pakistan’s corruption challenges. Together with the Accountability Lab, UNDP will partner with Integrity Idol, a national movement to recognize and celebrate honest government officials. The partnership with the Peace and Justice Network will lead to the development of a Knowledge Hub and Centre for Justice Statistics, and a roadmap for achieving SDG-16 by 2030. It will also develop a network of civil society organizations across Pakistan with the capacity to hold service providers accountable. The two organizations are members of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum convened by the Government of Pakistan’s Economic Affairs Division for consultations around the Open Government Platform National Action Plan.

Corruption is a major obstacle for governance, development and democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan ranked 116th out of 176 nations Transparency International’s (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2016, which signals an improvement over previous years, but also highlights the need for further improvement.

In Pakistan, UNDP works closely with government, communities and civil society in support of robust, inclusive and transparent institutions that benefit all Pakistanis, including the most marginalized. These include investments in innovation to increase citizen involvement in policymaking, redesign public services, and develop local, holistic solutions to Pakistan’s complex development challenges.
App brings election information at the swipe of a finger

On National Voter’s Day, 7 December 2017, the President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussain and Justice Sardar Muhammad Raza Khan, Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched a new tool that brings voters the information they need on the Election Commission of Pakistan, when they need it, at their fingertips.

Click ECP is a mobile phone app that Pakistani voters can download for free for Android or iOS, and receive up-to-the-minute information to help them become engaged and informed participants in the electoral process.

Using the app, voters can check their polling station details using the UNDP-supported GIS geo-mapping service, learn how to update their details on the electoral roll, learn about election laws, political parties and their symbols, and updated election results.

Through Click ECP, the ECP and UNDP continue to explore new avenues to share knowledge and create a better understanding of the electoral process. With more than 100 million mobile phone users in Pakistan, this technology has the potential to harness change at the grassroots, keep the public informed and help them stay actively engaged and informed in all stages of the electoral process.

The English version of the app is now available to download for free on the Google Play Store. An Urdu version of the app will be released in 2018.
On 20 December 2017, Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) organized a pictorial presentation in connection with the inauguration of a prefabricated block at ANF Police Station, Gwadar constructed through the financial assistance of UNODC and the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan, in Islamabad. The event was attended by the Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control (MNC) Iqbal Mehmood; the High Commissioner of Canada in Pakistan Perry Calderwood; UNODC Country Head Cesar Guedes; the Drug Liaison Officers of various countries, Foreign Dignitaries, Senior ANF officials and the media.

While speaking on the occasion, DG ANF Major General Musarrat Nawaz Malik HI (M) thanked the Government of Canada and UNODC for enhancing capacity-building of ANF. He apprised that recent contributions of Government of Canada through UNODC Country Programmes for Pakistan, in supplementing Pakistan’s counter narcotics pursuits are highly appreciable and would facilitate in infrastructure and technical uplift of Pakistan’s anti drug set-ups. He added that Pakistan gives exceptional importance to cooperation with the international community and sincerely acknowledges the support provided by the international partners, especially UNODC. He said that Canadian support to augment ANF capacity in strategically important places such as Gwadar will go a long way in making the world a safer place from drugs and related transnational organized crimes.

While addressing the event, he highlighted that trafficking of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals is a transnational organized crime and a growing challenge to the rule of law, good governance and development in many countries. He said that despite being the flag bearer of the fight against drugs, Pakistan has become a transit as well as a victim country of trafficking in illicit drugs and their precursor chemicals. He reaffirmed his commitment to continue this war against illicit drugs with the same resilience to protect our own society as well as shield the rest of the world from the devastating effects of illicit drugs.

UNODC Country Head Cesar Guedes and High Commissioner of Canada in Pakistan Perry Calderwood appreciated ANF’s achievements and its role as a specialized force in combating trafficking of illicit drugs at national, regional and global level. They assured their all-out support to ANF to tackle the menace more vigorously. They reaffirmed their support in capacity building of ANF and their key role for improving international cooperation across the globe.

While concluding the event, Secretary MNC Iqbal Mehmood reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to stem out the menace of drugs from the country, as well as the world. He added that Pakistan would continue to pursue the same resolve to strive for a world free of illicit drugs to protect the future generations.
A proactive approach to counter terrorism

The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), in collaboration with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Country Office Pakistan (UNODC), organized a two-day workshop on ‘Proactive Approach to Counter Terrorism’ at PC Bhurban, Murree.

The workshop brought together 32 participants from provincial and federal agencies to discuss and develop a common understanding of threat assessments as part of a proactive approach to counter terrorism.

During the opening session, Muhammad Jafer, Director General (Counter Terrorism) NACTA along with Syed Arslan, Advisor for the Pakistan’s Action to Counter Terrorism (PACT) Project, thanked the participants and highlighted the importance of the workshop. Later they both delivered presentations on the organizational mandates and roles of NACTA and UNODC.

The facilitators of the workshop Brigadier (R) Khalid Saleem and Olivia Hyvrier gave presentations on the framework for developing threat assessments and apprised the participants on the historical perspective of terrorism in Europe, especially in France. They also introduced the threat and risk assessment models and practices put in place by the European Union. On the second day of the workshop, the participants were divided into groups to conduct a case study by assessing a threat scenario and identifying appropriate measures at tactical, operational and strategic levels.

During the closing session of the workshop, UNODC Country Representative Cesar Guedes appreciated the efforts of the Government of Pakistan in combating terrorism and assured the participants of UNODC’s continuous support.

In concluding remarks, Ihsan Ghani, National Coordinator of NACTA thanked all the participants and highlighted the recent initiatives undertaken by NACTA including the development of a National Narrative to counter extremism. He informed the participants that under the PACT project, NACTA would continue to organize workshops in the near future.

As a token of appreciation National Coordinator of NACTA and UNODC Country Representative jointly distributed certificates to the participants.
In an effort to increase scrutiny over the security of air cargo consignments, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Pakistan marked the inauguration of Karachi Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU). This new multi-agency initiative is a platform that encourages better collaboration among all national agencies, which in one way or another have a mandate to ensure the security of air consignments, be it in the scope of passengers/airliners safety or curbing illicit trade.

During the inauguration ceremony, UNODC Representative Cesar Guedes acknowledged the commitment of all contributing stakeholders namely, Civil Aviation Authority, Customs and Anti Narcotics Force, and expressed appreciation towards the growing teamwork spirit among them. He suggested joint efforts in Air Cargo Control Unit will protect and empower international trade and at the same time contribute to improve regional and global security.

The new unit, ACCU, comes under the UNODC-WCO Global Container Control Programme (CCP). The programme is now running in 45 countries around the globe and its objective is to minimize the exploitation of legitimate trade as a cover for trafficking illegal commodities such as narcotics, precursors, arms and ammunition, endangered wildlife species, Intellectual Property Rights items and cultural heritage.
“Children should not be in jail. I want to see a vacant Youth Offenders Industrial School,” says Shehzad Roy

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) introduced singer Shehzad Roy in his new role as Goodwill Ambassador for UNODC Pakistan to a gathering of young inmates, senior officials from the Ministry of Narcotics Control, Foreign Affairs, Health, Police, Judiciary, Prison, Home Department Sindh and Diplomatic community and the media. The Launch Ceremony took place at the Juvenile Jail in Karachi.

Cesar Guedes, Representative UNODC mentioned that when deciding the venue for the event Mr. Roy insisted to have it with the inmates at the Youth Offenders Industrial School at Central Prison Karachi rather than having it in a hotel: he wanted to perform amongst them. Mr. Guedes suggests this added a new dimension to their work, which was fulfilled with the kind support of Mr. Mangan, IG at the Prison Sindh and the Home department Sindh.

Mr. Roy will be promoting UNODC’s work in the areas of Criminal Justice and Drug Demand Reduction, emphasizing positive values during his visits to schools, colleges, prisons, and rehabilitation centres. He will also raise awareness on UNODC’s work in Pakistan and highlight the need to curb drug abuse and associated crimes in the margins of UNODC’s mandate. He is expected to take part in a wide range of activities, such as the marking of World Drug Day, Anti-Corruption Day, Anti Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, supporting prison and police reforms, raising awareness and advocating gender-responsive services for drug abusers, and promoting knowledge of drug-related and HIV/AIDS issues.

Mr. Roy stated: “Children should not be in jail. I want to see a vacant Youth Offenders Industrial School”, adding that he will not merely be a symbolic ambassador, but wants to start bringing change from the ground up.

Mr. Roy paid bail for six of the inmates, who walked out of jail with him after the event. Their families were also there to take them home. The Goodwill Ambassador said it was disheartening to see children imprisoned for petty crimes or drug-related minor offenses, and that if he is able to help one child out of prison or persuade just one boy or girl to turn away from drugs, he will feel proud to have made a difference.

He also invited the bailed-out children on stage to sing with him one of his favorite songs. He was met with an ecstatic response from the young audience.

The event also saw the launch of Mr. Roy’s video for the song ‘Aik baar zuilm kay khilaf niklo ge tau jano ge ke tum akeile nahin.’
Standing united against corruption for a prosperous Pakistan

Every year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UN-ODC) in collaboration with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) celebrates International Anti-Corruption Day in order to raise public awareness of the detrimental impact of corruption and to reaffirm the commitment to tackle all its forms.

This year, the International Anti-Corruption Day was observed one day earlier, on December 8 at the President’s House under the theme of ‘United against Corruption for a Prosperous Pakistan’. It was hosted by His Excellency Mamnoon Hussain, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and attended by prominent guests, members of the diplomatic corps and the international community, dignitaries from the Government of Pakistan, media and civil society representatives.

The key speakers H.E. Mamnoon Hussain, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; Justice Javed Iqbal, the Chairman of the NAB; César Guedes, UNODC Representative in Pakistan; and Ahmad Mahboob, the President of the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) spoke with an united view on the need to apply and enhance a wide range of measures. These included observing the value of self-accountability, improving processes of the anti-corruption institutions guided by the recommendations of Pakistan’s Country Review Report in compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and establishing stronger partnerships with civil society organizations.

César Guedes emphasized the importance of standing united against corruption urging every member of society including the Government, non-governmental organizations, civil society, media, the private sector, and trade unions to work together in rejecting corruption. He then conveyed the message of Yury Fedotov, the Executive Director of UNODC, who vowed the commitment of UNODC to continue to work with other countries and many partners ensuring everyone is united against corruption for development, peace and security.

H.E. Mamnoon Hussain underlined the need to strengthen the rule of law in Pakistan through which the crimes of corruption are duly brought to justice, responding to people’s demand to eliminate corruption. Justice Javed Iqbal added that corruption cannot be tackled unless a zero-tolerance policy is fully implemented at every level of society, and expressed the renewed commitment of the National Accountability Bureau to be the forerunner in this regard under his leadership.

César Guedes was awarded a shield of honor by H.E. Mamnoon Hussain, for UNODC’s contribution to transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption governance through its Country Programme in Pakistan. During this week, anti-corruption messages were displayed at prominent points in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.
Follow-up roundtable discussion to the Country Review Report of Pakistan in compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized a roundtable discussion to foster cooperation and coordination of the international community in supporting Pakistan’s compliance with the UNCAC in line with the recommendations outlined in Pakistan’s Review Report.

In follow-up to the launch of the Country Review Report in compliance with the UNCAC, Jouhaida Hanano, Criminal Justice Programme Advisor at UNODC COPAK delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting key findings of the Country Review Report. The focus was on those where Pakistan requested technical support in, among others, the establishment of an anti-corruption academy, capacity building in specialized investigative areas, the establishment of a centralized asset management office, support in mutual legal assistance, the establishment of a full-pledged witness protection and whistle-blower programmes and specialized anti-corruption training particularly on anti-money laundering.

Discussions also included the best ways to join efforts in order to support the Government of Pakistan in improving its capacity in view of meeting the requirements stipulated in the UNCAC.

Deliberations culminated with a consensus among the participants to establish an anti-corruption group composed of the international community to coordinate its efforts in view of supporting the Government of Pakistan in meeting its needs to combat corruption. This forum will be a vehicle to share information, resources and expertise for informed programming to identify synergies and avoid duplication, thereby supporting Pakistan to enhance its capacity in line with international norms and standards.
On 16 November, UNESCO Islamabad, in collaboration with I-SAPS (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences) launched the GEM Report – ‘Accountability in education: meeting our commitments’. The Report looks at the different ways people and institutions should be held accountable for reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education. It stresses that accountability is indispensable in achieving the global education goal. It describes accountability in terms of how teachers teach, students learn, governments act, private sector behaves and donors respond. The report warns that disproportionate blame on any one actor for systemic educational problems can have serious negative side effects, widening inequality and damaging learning. There are 264 million children and youth out of school, and 100 million young people currently unable to read. The report cites an accountability vacuum with donors not delivering on their aid commitments for those in need. The share of aid to education has fallen for six years in a row. At the same time, donors increasingly demand that in exchange for aid, countries achieve results that sometimes divert energy away from systemic improvements in the education system. The Report highlights that “No approach to accountability will be successful without a strong enabling environment that provides actors with adequate resources, capacity, motivation and information to fulfil their responsibilities”.

Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan and MuhammadBaligh-ur-Rehman, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training officially launched the report. Vibeke Jensen highlighted that ambitious education outcomes, such as those in SDG 4, rely on multiple actors. But while responsibilities are shared, accountability is not: it is connected to single actors, who are held to account for their individual or institutional responsibilities. She also stressed that accountability starts with governments, as they are ultimately the primary duty bearers of the right to education.

Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman, said that democracy is the best accountability, and that financial allocation on education in Pakistan has increased and as a result more out of school children are now in schools. The launch was followed by a panel discussion facilitated by Salman Humayun, Executive Director of I-SAPS to discuss the education accountability issues in Pakistan especially from the provincial perspective on accountability. Speaking on the panel, Jamila Razzaq, who has also co-authored a national case study, stated that a well-performing education system in Pakistan can only be built by creating enabling political, social and legislative conditions.

A wide range of representatives from government, development partner agencies, civil society, academia, and media attended the event.
Students celebrate northern Pakistan’s unique biodiversity and cultures on International Mountain Day

International Mountain Day was celebrated on 11 November at an event organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan in the Pakistan National Council of Arts, with cultural performances, film screenings and talks about Pakistan’s mountain communities. The celebration was inaugurated by Syed Abu Ahmad Akif Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change, under the theme ‘Mountains under Pressure: Climate, Hunger, and Migration’.

United Nations Resident Coordinator Neil Buhne said Pakistan’s mountainous regions are some of the most breathtakingly beautiful environments in the world, but they are also extremely susceptible to the impacts of climate change. He added that mountain communities have an important role in preserving these delicate landscapes and exploiting them sustainably to earn livelihoods in harmony with nature. The aim of the event was to highlight Pakistan’s unique mountain cultures, their rich traditions and environment, as well as the threats they face. Amidst folk music and handicraft displays, students from the National University of Science and Technology, Bahria University, and Fatima Jinnah Women’s University participated in a documentary competition, short plays and mime performances. Women entrepreneurs and civil society representatives working in these areas also shared their stories.

Mountains cover about 175,000 square kilometres of Pakistan’s land area. In addition to its rich biodiversity, the northern region is home to many culturally unique communities. Although some 11 percent of the mountains are now protected, and a further 12 percent are community co-managed conservancies, the region’s biodiversity and culture are threatened by poverty, limited options for sustainable development, and climate change. UNDP’s Mountains and Markets initiative seeks to promote conservation by increasing demand and voluntary certification of sustainable non-timber forest products. UNDP also helps mountain communities protect themselves against potentially devastating glacial lake outburst flooding.
Together on stage in riveting play about women’s rights

The internationally acclaimed documentary play SEVEN had its Pakistani premiere with a reading last night at the Swedish Ambassador’s Residence in Islamabad.

Readers on stage were the Secretary, Ministry of Human Rights, Rabiya Javeri Agha; Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan, Chief Justice (R) Ali Nawaz Chowhan; engineer, mathematician and singer Momina Mustehsan; actress, model and activist, Mariyam Nafees; lawyer, executive director and founder of Digital Rights Foundation Nighat Dad; TV, film and theater actor and writer Osman Khalid Butt and Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan, Ingrid Johansson. The play was directed by Ms. Tülin Khalid Azim.

The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about the importance of access to justice for female victims of violence by promoting Pakistan’s existing legal services and framework on violence against women, such as the Federal Ministry of Human Rights’ toll-free helpline (1099) and legal advice to victims of violence and provincial laws such as the Punjab Protection of Women against violence Act.

Rabiya Javeri Agha stressed the importance of investing in the social capital of women: setting up norms and institutions. She mentioned her hope that the kind of mentorship these readers provide will be inspirational to the women of Pakistan.

The event was attended by approximately 150 people, including high-level officials, activists and dignitaries.

The play will next be performed in Lahore. SEVEN on Tour aims to continue throughout Pakistan in 2018.

The Embassy of Sweden in Pakistan, The European Union Delegation to Pakistan, The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women) and the Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (PODA), in collaboration with the Swedish Institute, organized the event.

The play is produced by Hedda Krausz Sjögren and written in 2007 by seven playwrights: Paula Cizmar, Catherine Filloux, Gail Kriegel, Carol K. Mack, Ruth Margraff, Anna Deveare-Smith and Susan Yankowitz in collaboration with Vital Voices Global Partnership.
Provincial Assembly illuminated to support 16 days to end violence against women and girls

The Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the support of UN Women held a press conference at the Provincial Assembly on 29 November 2017. During the 16 days, the WPC with support of UN Women held a series of events, including the inauguration of the provincial women empowerment policy and an event for women in the walled city highlighting gender based violence and showcasing the role of women home-based workers.

The Deputy Speaker, members of the Provincial Assembly, Government Officials, Members of the Civil Society and Journalists from both Print and Electronic media attended the event.

The press conference was addressed by the Deputy Speaker Provincial Assembly Mehartaj Roghani; the Chairperson of Women Parliamentary Caucus KP, Meraj Humayun Khan and the Secretary Social Welfare and Women Empowerment KP, Fareeha Paul. During the press conference the dignitaries elaborated upon the commitment of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to curb violence against women, in line with Pakistan’s National and International commitments. After the press conference, the provincial assembly building was lit with orange lights. Internationally, the color orange is the key theme that unifies all activities, and buildings and landmarks are lit and decorated in orange to bring global attention to the issue of violence against women and girls.

The dome of the assembly building remained lit until 10 December 2017. In addition banners were also installed at key points to highlight the commitment of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to curb violence against women and girls.
The company WeRplay has become the first game development studio in Pakistan to step up its commitment towards improving gender diversity within its business model by signing the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEP), with support from UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women).

UN Women and WeRplay will be working together to enhance women’s access to organized work opportunities. The Seven Principles for Women’s Empowerment – a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact – provide a set of guidelines to assist companies focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, through policy and action. This includes the promotion of women to executive positions, career development opportunities for women employees, supporting women-owned companies as vendors and service providers, promoting a positive image of women in marketing campaigns and enhancing basic facilities within the company.

Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative for UN Women Pakistan, congratulated WeRplay for committing to integrate the seven principles and explained that companies have a key role to play as ‘change agents’ to build a world where gender equality is a reality and to help women gain confidence in their ability to take managerial positions.

Winner of three P@SHA awards for gender diversity in 2014, 2015 and 2016, WeRplay already counts 37 percent female employees, among which 12 are in managerial positions. This is a significant achievement in a sector where women are underrepresented in Pakistan: only 0.2% of the women holding a professional degree work in the information and technology sector. Speaking on the occasion, Mohsin Afzal, CEO of WeRPlay, said this partnership with UN Women symbolizes commitment to support the empowerment of women through their overall corporate activities.

WeRplay is planning to undertake a comprehensive gender audit of its policies to get a full picture of the strengths and challenges of the company in terms of women’s empowerment. Conducted with the support of UN Women, this assessment will help identify windows of opportunities to deepen the involvement of the company in gender equality initiatives. The company will also take part in diverse events organized by UN Women where private companies will discuss recent pioneer thinking and exchange good practices to enhance women’s participation in the corporate sector.

The economic participation of women is recognized globally as essential for the progress of a nation and growth of its economy. By signing the seven steps of the Women’s Empowerment Principles, WeRplay takes on a global approach that 1644 companies have already taken in the world. To date, 25 companies in Pakistan have made a public commitment of support by signing onto the Women’s Empowerment Principles.

The event brought together youth from South Asian countries along with captains of the Under-19 cricket teams from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan - teams that will compete in the International Cricket Council (ICC) U19 Cricket World Cup in New Zealand in January 2018.

Adolescents from Pakistan, Memona Haleem (17) and Safeerullah Wazeer (19) along with the captain of the U19 cricket team Mohammad Hassan Khan attended the event. The Indian cricketer Youvraj Singh was also present on the occasion.

Speaking at the launch, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, Jean Gough said adolescence is a time of great opportunity and vulnerability, and that with investment and support, adolescents can reach their full potential. This can be achieved by supporting their access to spaces to speak up, and skills to successfully transition to adulthood. David Richardson, Chief Executive Officer of the International Cricket Council said the ICC Under 19 Cricket World Cup gives young players an unrivaled experience of global events, a real flavor of international cricket at senior level and a glimpse into what life as one of the world’s best is really like. But just as importantly it provides them with the opportunity to be involved in events like this and start to realise the potential they have to make a positive impact on the world through their sport.

A panel discussion on issues such as the right of adolescents to play, and the benefits that sports can provide to adolescents including improved self-esteem, health and ability to build life skills was held on the occasion which was followed by a friendly game of cricket between Youvraj Singh, the U-19 cricket players and youth attending the event. There are more adolescents in South Asia than anywhere else in the world. At the crossroads between childhood and adulthood, adolescents typically face many changes and uncertainties in their lives. Almost 1 in 2 girls in the region are married before the age of 18, and 1 in 5 give birth before they reach 18. More than 20 million adolescents 10-14 years old are out of school. An overwhelming 45 percent of adolescents believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for burning the meal she cooks for him. More than 4 in 10 adolescent girls are underweight. South Asia countries must invest in programmes and policies to improve the lives of adolescents in all areas.
The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) collaborated with Ali Xeeshan, a renowned Pakistani clothes designer, to develop a controversial piece worn by a child who walked down the ramp as the showstopper, in the finale of Bridal Couture Week 2017. Through this startling campaign, UN Women aims to make people aware of the issue of child marriages in Pakistan, their lifelong implications and how to take preventive action in order to address the phenomenon and help the potential and present victims.

This year’s bridal couture week was much the same as previous years, where bride after bride walked out on the ramp wearing magnificently extravagant outfits. However, right at the end, one specific outfit stood out from the rest and caught everyone’s attention. People stopped and stared at it for a longer while. It was a school uniform, embellished with heavy motifs, worn by a young girl. This was used to question the unfortunate nature of many marriages that should not be a cause of celebration for the brides, or even the nation as a whole. The horrible trade-off that takes place when a child is deprived of her right to an education, and instead is being dressed to be someone’s wife, is what this campaign targets.

Pakistan’s Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) sets the legal age of marriage to be 16 for women and 18 for men, but it is still estimated that more than 20 percent of women are married off before the age of 18 and 3 percent overall do not even cross the age of 15 before they get married. There have been efforts to increase the legal age of marriage from 16 to 18 for women all across the nation but this has been faced with criticism and resistance. Despite having dire consequences for defying the legislation, child marriages are still a norm in Pakistan.

The campaign was further launched through a website and on social media after the live showcase of the bridal uniform, and aims to evoke emotions within people to take action. UN Women redirected the public to the campaign website; www.thebridaluniform.com, urging people to sign a petition that could turn this conversation into a topic of discussion in the Parliament. A donation fund on the website has been set up and funds will directly go to the non-governmental organization Kashf Foundation, which plans to take this initiative to the next level by conducting an on-ground activation that speaks directly to the masses. Moreover, part of the proceeds from Ali Xeeshan’s collection were donated to Pirbat Women’s Development Society and Sujag Sansar, organizations striving to end violence against women and working against early child marriages in Pakistan.

This campaign is created together with BBDO Pakistan and aims to use country-wide awareness as a way to push forward the effective implementation of the legislation.
Women’s rights in Federally Administered Tribal Areas

‘16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence’ is an international campaign originating from the first Women Global Leadership Institute, sponsored by the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership in 1991. To commemorate ‘16 Days of Activism’ and International Human Rights Day, UN Women in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights and National Commission of the Status of Women co-organised a briefing session at a local hotel on ‘Women’s Rights in FATA.’

UN Women has undertaken a gender analysis of legal reforms and customary practices in FATA, in order to strengthen evidence base for legal reforms and policy action. This informative briefing session was an opportunity for UN Women to share the analysis and key findings of this gender analysis. Jamshed Kazi Country Representative of UN Women welcomed the guests to the session and spoke about the importance of sharing these key findings in order to better formulate policy. He said UN Women is working on FATA to collect data, do a gender analysis etc. in order to use this for policy action in gender gaps, especially in voter registration, and stated that the commission is ready to work with women in FATA.

UN Women also launched a very enlightening documentary, showcasing women’s experiences and achievements in FATA, with the aim to amplify the voices of women for inclusion in all stages of reforms process. The overall feel of the event was that women need to have a stronger role in FATA reforms process and their priorities should be duly reflected in the legal and policy reforms. While enormous challenges are there, efforts are being made to ensure women’s inclusion and representation in order to safeguard women’s rights in FATA. With the coordination and cooperation of all stakeholders, desired positive change can be brought forward to improve the lives of all citizens and especially women.
Collaboration for the economic empowerment of women

The Seven Principles for Women’s Empowerment are a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact. These principles provide a set of guidelines to help companies focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, through policy and action.

Shazia Syed, Chairperson and CEO, Unilever Pakistan, highlighted that the business case for gender equality and diversity has long been accepted as an integral part of organizations across the world.

Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan congratulated Unilever in driving change from the top and galvanizing momentum to advance gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

By signing the Women’s Empowerment Principles, Unilever Pakistan joins a global movement for women empowerment in the corporate sector. Globally 1661 companies have already adopted the principles, of which Unilever’s headquarter has also been a signatory since 2013. The initiative includes the promotion of women to executive positions, career development opportunities for women employees, addressing discrimination against women and protecting them from workplace violence, supporting women-owned companies as vendors and service providers, promoting a positive image of women in marketing campaigns and enhancing facilities for women within the company.

Unilever has made gender equality and the improvement of opportunities for women into a global priority across its business. This is also reflected by actions being taken by the organization in Pakistan to maximize the potential of women, advance careers and help maintain integrity and equality across the business value chain for both genders.

UN Women supports the empowerment of women, including their right to exercise agency over their life, to fully participate in decision-making, to access and control resources, and to take part in economic and political affairs. UN Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme is currently being scaled up to all four provinces of Pakistan and FATA to support women and excluded groups to access income generating activities, formal employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The programme will provide right-holders with capacity-building trainings, support in business development and financial literacy skills.
Women safety audit report on public transport in Lahore reveals challenges faced by women commuters

To reveal and assess the safety concerns of women and girls with regards to the public transport in Lahore, Pakistan’s first Women Safety Audit Report was launched on December 19.

The Women Safety Audit in Public Transport in Lahore was conducted by Aurat Foundation and co-led by the Women’s Development Department (WDD) Punjab and UN Women, in collaboration with the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), the Chief Minister’s Strategic Reform Unit (SRU), the Punjab Safe City Authority (PSCA) and funded by the Australian Government.

It focuses on the bus services provided by the Lahore Transport Company (LTC) and Metro Bus and includes a detailed desk review, a perception study with 903 women commuters and 100 bus drivers and conductors, key informant interviews, safety walk evaluations at selected bus stops, and focus group discussions.

Speaking on the occasion, Country Representative for UN Women, Jamshed Kazi said sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in public spaces restrict women’s movement and social interaction, and in turn have a profound impact on women’s daily routines, lifestyle, and their emotional and physical health.

In her introductory remarks, the Secretary Women Development Department for Punjab, Bushra Aman said the Women’s Safety Audit supplements government priorities for women’s empowerment in Punjab in pursuance of Sustainable Development Goal 5 and 11.

The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Margaret Adamson said Australia is supporting national and provincial efforts to end harassment and violence against women, providing services to women survivors of gender based violence and engaging with communities to challenge discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls.

Presenting an overview of the project, the Programme Lead for EVAW, Governance and Human Rights for UN Women, Aisha Mukhtar said that the study was undertaken as part of UN Women’s project aimed at creating safe spaces for women and girls, through policy research, community outreach and youth advocacy.

Lead researcher Raana Malik shared the key findings of the study. She said that inadequate infrastructure and security arrangements, a gender-neutral approach by administrators and policymakers, social attitudes towards women and girls, a lack of awareness among the general population about the impacts of sexual harassment on women’s and girls’ lives, are some of the major reasons why harassment on public transport have gone unnoticed and perhaps increased.

Resident Director Aurat Foundation, Mumtaz Mughal said that without addressing underlying concerns about women’s safety in public transport, greater mobility for women and contribution effectively towards the larger goal of gender equality in Pakistan cannot be achieved.
14 CEOs strengthen their commitment to promote gender equality at workplace

Fourteen CEOs from private sector companies in Pakistan have signed the CEO Statement of Support for the Women’s Empowerment Principles, at an event on 19 December 2017 in Sialkot, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women Pakistan) and Baidarie (a non-government organization established by rural women).

The Women’s Empowerment Principles is a partnership initiative of UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and provides a set of considerations to help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, through policy and action.

The launching ceremony, hosted by Baidarie and UN Women Pakistan, aimed at encouraging high-level leadership to promote gender diversity and inclusive work force within the corporate sector.

These fourteen CEOs, by signing the seven steps of the Women’s Empowerment Principles take on a global approach to four key areas: promoting economic development through women entrepreneurship, championing gender diversity in business and at corporate level, public-private partnerships for advancing women’s economic opportunities and providing potential business and investment opportunities to women through supplier diversity and marketing practices.

This is the second batch of WEPs signatories in Sialkot, following the commitment of 17 leading export-oriented companies in 2015 that became pioneers in offering employment to women and girls in a gender responsive atmosphere. UN Women also supported seven of these companies in developing gender-responsive policies and procedures and provided them with a road map for continuous improvement. This includes developing mechanisms to encourage and recruit women to enter the industry; strengthening women’s presence, position and role in management; strengthening employee trainings and the implementation of harassment of women at Workplace Act 2012 and 2015; promoting literacy and basic education for employees.

Through UN Women’s programme for the Empowerment of Women Garment Workers, more than 800 women workers already hold a formal employment in industrial units of the textile/garment sector.

The economic participation of women is recognized globally as essential for the progress of a nation and growth of its economy. Around the world 1667 companies have already signed on the Women’s Empowerment Principles. To date, 39 companies in Pakistan have made a public commitment of support by signing onto the Women’s Empowerment Principles.
UN Women and the Strategic Reforms Unit (SRU) of the Punjab Government on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for future cooperation in promoting gender equality efforts. The MoU was signed by the Country Representative for UN Women, Jamshed M. Kazi, and Director General, SRU, Salman Sufi in the presence of officials representing both sides and media representatives.

Through this cooperation, joint initiatives of strategic importance related to women’s empowerment and gender equality, with a focus on ending violence against women will be undertaken. Salman Sufi said the Government of the Punjab is at the forefront on the war against violence, and the Strategic Reforms Unit under the guidance of Chief Minister Punjab is consistently striving to help redefine the lives of women with reforms like one stop shops for survivors of violence and gender sensitization of curriculum in Punjab.

To achieve their common objectives, both parties will work together in establishing and strengthening social protection infrastructure and services for women and girls. This will be in line with global standards and best practices including Essential Services Package for Survivors of Gender based Violence. Given the success of the Violence Against Women Center (VAWC) Multan, a significant focus of this cooperation will include potential replication of Punjab’s VAWC across Pakistan and globally. In addition, both parties will extend technical support around respective legislative engagements, especially for the effective implementation and functioning of the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act.

Jamshed M. Kazi, commended the cutting-edge innovative measures, commitment and leadership of the Punjab Government and especially the Strategic Reforms Unit towards ending violence against women and girls. He also remarked that the MoU would further strengthen mutual efforts for the elimination of all kinds of discrimination and violence against women and girls not only in Punjab, but across Pakistan and internationally, through UN Women’s offices and partner networks.

The agreement will also lead to collaborative efforts to enhance the mobility and safe public spaces for women and girls’ and capitalize on each other’s experiences in addressing violence against women.

#WomenRightsAreHumanRights’

To mark Human Rights Day, WFP Pakistan celebrated 16 days of activism from 25 November to 10 December to promote awareness on gender-based violence, show solidarity against it and to embrace the fact that #WomenRightsAreHumanRights
Joining forces to fight Dengue

The ongoing outbreak of Dengue fever in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which was first reported on 19 July 2017 is now getting under control. The outbreak has registered 107,866 suspected cases, of which 23,719 cases tested positive for Dengue fever. The most affected district in KP is Peshawar, where 99,589 suspected cases were registered as of 3 November 2017 of which 21,692 cases tested positive for Dengue fever. This is not the first time Pakistan is facing a Dengue outbreak. In 2011, more than 15,900 suspected cases were reported from the Haripur and Abbottabad district in KP. In 2013 about 9038 confirmed cases were reported from the district of Swat. In 2015 the disease appeared in the Lachi area of Kohat division where 270 people were affected by the virus.

Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne viral infection that causes a flu-like illness, and sometimes a potentially lethal complication called Dengue Haemorrhagic fever. The viruses are passed on to humans through the bites of an infective female Aedes mosquito, which acquires the virus while feeding on the blood of an infected person. Growing cities due to increased population influx from rural areas and un-planned urbanization, insufficiency of water and sanitation services resulting in changed habits of local communities for storage of potable water have provided the required habitat for breeding of this domestic species of mosquito.

WHO is supporting the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to combat the epidemic. This includes providing standard guidelines and capacity building in the planning and implementation of prevention and control measures. The main areas of focus are disease surveillance, vector control, case management and community awareness.

Under the leadership of the Provincial Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in partnership with WHO and UNICEF the largest ever community based larval source identification and elimination was launched in 14 high endemic Union Councils of Peshawar. The campaign focused on community awareness building on causes and prevention and house-to-house identification and elimination of larvae. 1500 government staff including Lady Health workers, environmental health workers and volunteers have been engaged in this campaign.

It is important to highlight that more than 190,000 households in various union councils of Peshawar have been sprayed with adulticide (space spraying). Larval breeding site identification and elimination were conducted in 90,000 Households. During the campaign, the people of Peshawar were very receptive to the idea of larva detection in their homes. Two weeks after the campaign and based on a daily reporting system, the total number of cases has dropped from 139 on 18 October to 55 cases on 3 November 2017 with over 84 percent of houses visited for identification and elimination of larvae.

The approach and backbone of the entire campaign are giving the message "NO HOUSE SHOULD BE MISSED".

On the prevention side there’s a huge potential in people, government relevant sectors and the World Health Organization to work together and educate the masses regarding prevention and management of vector borne diseases. Only preventive measures, inter-sectoral collaboration and community ownership will help to clean sweep Dengue fever.
In connection with celebrating World Antibiotic Awareness Week, observed from 13-19 November 2017, the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) jointly organized a walk on 16 November 2017, beginning at the NIH gate and ending at the entrance gate leading towards Park Road, Islamabad.

Every year in November, the World Antibiotics Awareness Week (WAAW) presents an opportunity to educate the public, health professionals, and policymakers on the dangers of antibiotic resistance and ways to combat it at local, national and global levels. The WAAW is an opportunity to advocate for the proper use of antibiotics and raise awareness of antibiotics as a precious resource that must only be taken with a doctor's prescription. The aim is to help reduce the improper consumption of antibiotics, keep antibiotics effective as long as possible so that those in need can get the best possible treatment, while reducing the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

The main message for the WAAW this year is to ‘Always Seek the Advice of Health Care Providers before Taking Antibiotics’.

AMR is a cross cutting issue that touches upon health, veterinary, agriculture and environment sectors.

People belonging to different strata of society from both public and private sectors participated in the walk: NIH staff along with students of the College of Medical Technology, WHO Country Office, National Veterinary Laboratory, Pakistan Agricultural Research Organization, National Agricultural Research Organization, Shifa Hospital Islamabad, DHO, Lady Health Workers of ICT. The participants held banners, placards, brochures and posters displaying information and awareness raising messages, with slogans in Urdu and English highlighting the different themes of the World Antibiotics Awareness Week.

At the end of the walk, speakers from both health and veterinary sectors addressed the gathering and highlighted the importance of rational use of antibiotics and advocating stopping self-medication.

Overuse of antibiotics has increased manifold globally, resulting in an ever-increasing public health ‘crisis’ of antimicrobial resistance which is responsible for prolonged morbidity due to resistant infections and significant deaths in every region of the world.

The World Health Organisation in collaboration with OIE and FAO has developed a Global Action Plan on AMR to support development, control, distribution and appropriate use of antimicrobial medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines and other interventions while promoting affordable access to existing and new antimicrobials, advocacy and raising awareness on AMR. Pakistan as part of the global commitment, has also developed its National Action Plan on AMR through a comprehensive consultative process involving the relevant sectors.
Global goals for health and wellbeing cannot be achieved without reduction in preterm births and child deaths

As Pakistan observes the 7th annual World Prematurity Day, a strong commitment towards reducing the number of preterm births in the country is imperative for progress towards global goals for health and wellbeing. An estimated 860,000 premature births are recorded each year in Pakistan of which nearly 102,000 children die due to related complications, says UNICEF. Pakistan is ranked second among the top ten countries that account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths from preterm birth complications.

Preterm births are one of the leading causes of death of children under five years of age. Globally, fifteen million babies are born before time each year and over 1 million children die before their fifth birthday.

UNICEF in partnership with the Government of Pakistan is supporting efforts to reduce child morbidity and mortality. One initiative towards that end 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 newborn 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.

On World Prematurity Day, UNICEF emphasizes that the reduction in 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 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.
Planning to strengthen emergency care system in Pakistan

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination (MoNHS-R&C), Pakistan in collaboration with the WHO country office and with the support provided by the WHO Headquarters and Regional Office, convened a National Meeting for Developing Consensus-Based Action Priorities Based on the Results of the WHO Emergency Care System Assessment (ECSA), on 14-15 November 2017, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Participants represented emergency care system professionals and stakeholders from Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, KPK, Punjab, Sindh as well as from MoNHSR&C.

The meeting aims to review the WHO East Central and South African results undertaken by national experts and stakeholders from participating provinces. Based on these results, the meeting also aims to build consensus on action priorities to address identified gaps in the following areas: system organization and governance; finance; emergency care data; quality improvement; scene care; transport and transfer; facility-based emergency care; rehabilitation for emergency conditions; as well as emergency preparedness. The action priorities serve as a substrate for an implementation plan that would inform policy-makers, health system administrators, healthcare providers and other stakeholders in their efforts to strengthen the emergency care system in the country.

The meeting was inaugurated by Director-General Sabeen Afzal, Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination and Mohammad Assai Ardakani, WHO Representative in Pakistan.

Mohammad Assai Ardakani highlighted that although emergency medical care is being provided by different hospitals and health facilities, it is fragmented. He emphasized the importance of a linked pre-hospital care, well equipped ambulances, properly trained health workers and well-functioning trauma and emergency medical centers.

Sabeen Afzal said that there is a dire need to streamline the policies/protocols related to emergency care system. Service delivery, no doubt, is the mandate of provinces but a nationwide emergency medical care system needs to be put in place.

This meeting is part of a broader WHO regional initiative to strengthen emergency care systems in EMR Member States. The exercise has already been done in Egypt, Iran, Libya and Tunisia. It is hoped that the outcome of this meeting will pave the way for more structured actions to strengthen the system in Pakistan both at the national and regional levels.
Pakistan is highly committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Health Vision 2016-2025 strives to provide a responsive national direction to confront various health challenges, keeping Universal Health Coverage as its ultimate goal. The principles include: good governance, innovation and transformation, equity and pro-poor approach, responsiveness, transparency and accountability, and integration and cross-sectoral synergies.

The 63rd session of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee endorsed a resolution, which urged member states to incorporate the Family Practice (FP) approach into Public Health Care services as an overarching strategy towards Universal Health Coverage. WHO Pakistan, under the leadership of the Director General Health Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination and through active engagement of Agha Khan University and Khyber Medical University, developed Six tools of FP approach namely: assessment of PHC, catchment area, essential FP package, family folders, referral system and public – private partnership have been developed with the assistance of two leading medical universities. Two consultative meetings conducted to review the tool and develop consensus as well as the way forward were held on 11-13 December at Islamabad and 18-20 December 2017 at Karachi.

The inaugural session at the Islamabad meeting was chaired by Assad Hafeez, Director General, Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination. He mentioned that Family Practice is integrated globally in WHO 13 GPW and locally for the betterment of health services delivery. He said three main challenges to address the successful implementation of Family Practice in Pakistan exist, namely: redefining the catchment population; training of 50 to 60 thousand general physicians, nurses and paramedics; and getting the private sector on board. He explained the importance of the Family Practice approach in the context of a principle shift from present tax based service provision system to insurance-based system in the country. Dr Assad Hafeez, Director General Health also attended the first meeting in Islamabad. The Karachi meeting was chaired by Director General (Sindh) Akhlaq Khan. Mohammad Assai Ardakanai, WHO Representative, Pakistan explained the characteristics, challenges and way forward for the adaptation of the Family Practices approach. Dr. Khan and Dr. Hayat, Additional Secretary Balochistan inaugurated the second workshop, held from 18-20 December in Karachi and have shown their strong commitment for the implementation of family practice in the selected districts of their provinces.

In these 3-day workshops the participants reviewed the tools and came to a conclusion on how best they can be utilized in 11 Model districts of Pakistan. Four provinces also prepared the provincial road maps for implementation. Both the Government authorities at federal level and the WHO team will be monitoring these.
Humanitarian Response Facility provides warehouse and logistical services to Education and Health Departments

The United Nations World Food Programme’s Humanitarian Response Facility (HRF) in Chashma Achozai, Quetta Balochistan is providing warehouse and logistical services to Education and Health Departments of the Government of Balochistan, along with other United Nations agencies including UNICEF Pakistan, UNHCR Pakistan and INGOs.

WFP initiated building and providing storage service to the Government Departments on a cost-recovery basis. In a senior level discussion, the officials from Health and Education departments of the Government of Balochistan shared their past experience on the challenges they faced during an emergency in the Province. They explained that commodities were stored in departments’ own warehouses, which were not fulfilling the desired requirements. In addition to that, the staff was also untrained and had less expertise in managing stock and in supply chain planning. Getting WFP’s warehouse management services has been a relief, which translates into significant cost savings for operations. Logistics staff are reassured that WFP is managing stocks as per the required international standards following warehouse management policies and SOPs, and now can focus on supply chain-related issues instead.

Currently, 13 partners have signed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the WFP’s Provincial Office in Balochistan, and WFP looks forward to more partners availing its services and expertise in Logistics. Overall, an average of 2500 cubic meters is utilized on a monthly basis by providing warehouse services to WFP’s partners. A total of $51000 was generated in the first six months of 2017, which also includes the transportation services that WFP provides to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency’s office in Quetta, Balochistan. This is a highly sustainable business model to provide logistical services to humanitarian partners on a cost recovery basis. This is ultimately allowing WFP Balochistan Logistic Unit to remain operational at all times, even that of non-emergency and ultimately maintaining its emergency response capacity.

With more than 50 years’ experience delivering food assistance in some of the planet’s remotest and most insecure regions, WFP is a partner of choice in humanitarian response and also, increasingly, in the effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Promoting innovation through Investors Connect Programme

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in collaboration with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) organized an ‘Investors Connect Programme’ (ICP) to bring together innovators and investors to promote innovations and explore mutually beneficial matchmakings.

The innovators of UNIDO’s Global Cleantech Innovation Program (GCIP) participated in the Investors Connect Program and presented their innovations to the potential investors so that investors could support commercialization of innovative business ideas.

Speaking at the occasion, Maroof Afzal, Secretary, Ministry of Industries and Production said that government should make supportive policies for innovators to bring industrial revolution in Pakistan. He said Pakistan’s 60 percent youth under-30 offered a great potential for innovations.

He added that a conducive environment and good incentives were needed for innovative ideas to flourish and appreciated the initiative of ICCI and UNIDO for taking lead to organize the Investors Connect Program. He also urged the investors to support innovators for building innovative culture in Pakistan and stressed for a mechanism to address barriers and support creative talent and new technologies in Pakistan.

Sheikh Amir Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan has great talent of innovators who need right direction and support to excel. He stressed that public-private partnership models should be developed to support innovators. He assured that ICCI would continue to partner with UNIDO in initiatives aimed at promoting innovators, startups and SMEs.

At this occasion, ICCI also launched an ‘Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum’ (IEF) to bring all public and private sector organizations working for promoting innovations, at a single platform and bring synergy in their efforts for better promotion of innovators and start-ups. HEC, Ignite and UNIDO have assured to support ICCI in this initiative to foster a culture of innovations in the region.

Nadia Aftab, UNIDO Country Director said that access to capital was major hurdle for Pakistani innovators and hoped that ICP would help innovators in transforming innovative ideas into rising brands.

Neil Buhne, UN Resident Coordinator and Alois Mhlanga, UNIDO Project Manager from HQ also spoke at the occasion. They said Pakistan has great future for innovations and entrepreneurship. They were optimistic that such programs would unleash real potential of Pakistani innovators to grow into big brands of the country. At the occasion a Final Gala was also organized to reward the five best innovators of GCIP.
Pakistan gets its first batch of Certified Energy Auditors

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization, under its Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Project has successfully concluded the first ever training program of Certified Energy Auditor (CEA), conducted locally by international trainers from the world-renowned energy certifying institute, Association of Energy Engineers (AEE), USA. This training module is a part of a larger training program by UNIDO under a project named ‘Sustainable Energy Initiative for Industries in Pakistan’, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in collaboration with Ministry of Climate Change.

Two batches of 22 professionals, including three women professionals from energy service companies (ESCO’s), industry, academia, and government departments dealing with energy efficiency, attended the trainings, to become CEA’s. The two weeks training program was conducted in collaboration with the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore (Faisalabad Campus) and Alkaram Textile Mills, Karachi, who contributed to the program by hosting the three days training at their facilities. The training will provide an impetus to the promotion of energy efficiency systems and technologies, through bringing the energy audit protocols up to international standards.

Speaking at the concluding session of the training, the National Project Manager, Masroor Ahmed Khan, attributed the training as the first step towards the long overdue requirement of meeting the international standards of energy auditing in the country. He informed the audience that it was just a beginning towards a broader training program, comprised of around seven different training modules, including the course to become a Certified Energy Manager. The visiting international trainer from the Association of Energy Engineers, Wael Alkous, highlighted the importance of CEA, by elaborating on the commercial value of this course, as well its impact towards building capacities of the local professional.

The GM Human Resources, Alkaram Textile Mills, Nimra Hafeez, in her message, thanked UNIDO for providing such an opportunity to the industrial sector, and assured her co-operation to collaborate further with UNIDO in achieving its objectives.

She also elaborated her efforts to bring more women into the industrial sector to achieve the target of 6% women in Alkaram Textile in 2018. The trainees expressed their full satisfaction on the training course and acknowledged the importance of the training. They applauded the efforts from UNIDO, which they hoped would greatly strengthen their capacities to further improve their quality of service and even to widen their professional scope.
UNIDO and GEF’s Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) includes a global competition aimed at promotion of innovations in the area of Clean Technologies. This global competition is simultaneously carried out in seven countries around the world. Its main aim is to foster innovations in Renewable energy, Energy Efficiency, Water Efficiency, Waste to Energy and Green Building. The target market of Cleantech competition is SMEs and Startup companies. Winners will be given prizes ranging from US$ 15,000 to 20,000 plus mentoring and training in Silicon Valley, USA.

This year that national winner for this competition was Modulus Tech, a start-up that makes houses that can be assembled by anyone in as little as 3 hours. These houses come flat-packed with integrated utilities, as well as insulated panels that can be assembled using simple hand tools. Not only do the houses follow international building codes, but they are also extremely durable and are safe from earthquakes and cyclones. Moreover, these houses cost only $3,000.

The technology was developed by 3 civil engineers from NED University Karachi; Nabeel Siddiqui, Yaseen Khalid and M. Saquib, who were extremely passionate about solving the global housing problem in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis and other humanitarian as well as natural disasters. With over 65 million people displaced today and over 200 million more climate migrants predicted by the year 2100, they realized the dire need of sustainable housing.

Modulus Tech Homes make it possible to set up large housing societies quickly at a fraction of the cost of traditional construction methods. The structures are not limited to houses but due to their modular design they can also be used for labour housing, disaster management, tourist abodes, health clinics and much more. Moreover, the houses are relocatable and can be transported easily.

The judges at GCIP were particularly impressed by the scale of the problem the start-up aims to solve along with the social and environmental impact of their technology. The houses have a carbon footprint that is over 50 times lower than our existing construction methods, around 300,000 litres of water are saved in their manufacturing with negligible waste products, all the materials are recyclable, the houses are tremendously energy efficient, and have a very low embodied energy. Moreover, the flat-packed design makes it possible to transport 8 houses in a single truck providing significant savings in fuel consumption.

The team will now be travelling to Silicon Valley to represent Pakistan and compete at a global scale with start-ups working on the most innovative clean-technologies from around the world.
Awarding Pakistani innovators in cleantech

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization’s (UNIDO) Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) organized an impressive awards distribution ceremony to reward the most promising Pakistani innovators in the field of clean technologies in Islamabad. The event was opened by the Federal Secretary for Climate Change, Syed Abu Ahmed Akif, who stressed the importance of clean technology innovation in mitigating the harmful impacts caused by climate change.

The President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Amir Waheed strongly encouraged local and international investors to become frontrunners in clean technology investment in Pakistan enhancing the chances of these brilliant ideas to reach the market.

This year, GCIP granted 5 awards under different categories; the first prize went to the team ‘Modulus Tech’ who innovated a new design of low cost, energy efficient houses. The runner up prize was given to team ‘Biotech’ who had made a dual function solar system for rural areas, which can run water pumps as well as flour mills. The most promising women-led team award was given to ‘Aerosync’, who came up with an innovative solar power cart for roadside street vendors. This year two new prizes were introduced, titled ‘Industry Challenge Award’. The first was a solution for the steel industry awarded to team ‘Bitsym Bitpredict’, the second such prize was given to ‘Crean’ who has technology for utilizing and regenerating old batteries.

The UNIDO Country Representative, Nadia Aftab, shared UNIDO’s vision on energy and environment in promoting clean technologies while pinpointing UNIDO’s full commitment to further strengthen the cooperation with the Ministry of Industries and Production. The GCIP Project Manager from UNIDO HQ Alois Mhlanga recognized the high level of success of GCIP in Pakistan. He deeply emphasized the prospects and need for sustainability of this programme through national partners.

It is envisaged that GCIP will expand its geographical coverage to at least 20 other countries and thematically by moving to integrated approaches including food and energy systems, sustainable cities, the protection of the global commons, etc. In order to integrate the lessons learnt from the past 6 years, the next phase of GCIP will have a bigger focus on entrepreneurship, commercialization and product development and validation as well as on catalyzing private and public (blended funding) investments.

The ceremony was attended by more than 200 high ranking officials and dignitaries, Ambassadors, international donor agencies, UNIDO Field and HQ staff, GEF, Rectors and Vice Chancellors of Universities, government institutions including allied departments of MoCC, MoIP, investors, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and private sector stakeholders.
Developing youth employment strategy in Pakistan Administered Kashmir

The State of Pakistan Administered Kashmir (PAK) has a high Youth unemployment rate (18.44%) as compared to other regions and provinces. Youth unemployment is on rise, and the situation calls for a coherent and integrated Youth Employment Strategy to make a visible impact. This was the conclusion of the Regional Consultation on Youth Employment held in Muzaffarabad on 19 December 2017.

The Government of PAK in collaboration with the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) organized the fourth provincial consultative workshop on “Youth Employment Framework”. The workshop was attended by the Government departments, United Nations’ agencies, Academia, Civil Society Organizations, employers, Workers’ organizations, Youth-led organizations and the youth representing PAK.

Seven thematic areas relating to Youth Employment were discussed including:
1) Education and Training
2) Employment opportunities at provincial level
3) Youth Employment in Rural Value Chains
4) Youth Employment in Mega Development Projects
5) Overseas Employment of Youth
6) Self-employment and Enterprise Development
7) Social Protection for unemployed Youth.

The Chief Guest Raja Muhammad Abbas Khan, Secretary Sports, Youth, Culture, Food and Transport, Government of PAK said that youth unemployment is a result of employment opportunities which are available only in the public sector, and stressed the need to unveil employment opportunities in other areas like enterprise development for youth and particularly for those living in rural areas. He also said that although the education level is high, the quality of education is low.

Zahoor Awan, General Secretary Pakistan Workers’ Federation (PWF) shared that ILO has developed 189 Labour Conventions, including ILO core conventions that have been ratified by the Government of Pakistan. He emphasized the importance of employable skills for youth and enterprise development. He also highlighted that social protection is vital for youth to avoid any unrest situation in the country.

The ILO Senior Programme Officer, Saad Gilani highlighted the importance of Youth for development of country. Under Pakistan’s Decent Work Country Programme (2016-2020), ILO was providing technical and financial support to ILO’s constituents (i.e. Employers, Workers and Government of Pakistan) to create an enabling environment for the creation of decent work for young women and men and would continue its support in this regard.

ILO’s collaboration with the Prime Minister Youth Programme to formulate a youth employment framework is an example of on-going efforts to create decent work opportunities for youth. Participants shared ideas to overcome challenges by using available resources. Similar consultations are planned in other provinces and regions of the country in coming months.
Consensus emerges to escalate efforts for improved Occupational Safety and Health conditions of Pakistan’s mine workers

The ILO in coordination with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) convened a National Tripartite Consultation on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in the Mining Sector from 21 to 22 November. The consultation brought together 55 senior delegates from the Government, employers, workers, academia and other significant mining sector stakeholder organizations/institutions. It was organized in the backdrop of an increasing number of fatal accidents in mines that have been recently reported. Records indicate that more than 220 workers lost their lives in fatal mine accidents during the period 2010-16.

This Consultation took stock of the Occupational Safety and Health situation in the mining sector, raised awareness on the sub-optimal working conditions, mapped possible solutions for improvement and identified roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in promoting a preventive safety and health culture.

The ILO Director, ILO Country Office for Pakistan, Ingrid Christensen recalled the right of workers to a safe and healthy working environment. She hoped that the consultation would result in recommendations for concrete steps towards curbing the number of fatalities and other injuries to health, guided by the ILO Convention on Safe and Health in Mining, 1995 (no 176). The need for cooperation among Governments, employers and workers was highlighted.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Senior Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) Noor Zaman Khan informed the participants about the Government’s unequivocal commitment to support efforts to improve OSH conditions of mine workers. The senior representatives of Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF) and Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP) also pledged their support in advancing the agenda of safeguarding mineworkers.

The participants highlighted the immediate need to enhance cooperation among stakeholders, improve the current data management system on OSH as well as capacity building interventions for workers and employers in the sector. Participants also suggested that the ratification of the Convention on Safety and Health in Mines would facilitate the implementation of recommended efforts.

The national OSH Consultation in mining was supported through ILO’s Sectoral Policies Department and the ILO Project on Strengthening Labour Inspection in Pakistan funded by the Dutch Government. The Global Union IndustriAll contributed with specific technical expertise on OSH in the mining sector.
Pakistan faces challenges of economic transition; globalization of trade and technology is bringing new challenges in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH). Furthermore, the 18th constitutional amendment made it obligatory for provincial governments to legislate laws at provincial level, implement, enforce and report on Pakistan’s international commitments to the Federal Government.

Within this context, and in light of the ongoing OSH legislation processes at provincial level, a two day national tripartite consultation was convened from 23 to 24 November to gain a shared understanding on how to develop sound OSH legislation among stakeholders. The national consultation was a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD) and the ILO with funding from the European Union and Dutch Government.

Her Excellency Ardi Stoios-Braken, Ambassador, The Kingdom of the Netherlands emphasized the shared goal of the stakeholders in achieving a safe and healthy working environment for every worker in Pakistan. She also stressed the importance of labor inspection as a necessary element for the realization of OSH and its importance in ensuring the continuity of Pakistan’s GSP-plus status awarded to the country in 2014 for a ten-year period.

Khawaja Nauman representative of Employers’ Federation of Pakistan (EFP) said his organization had no hesitation in pointing out that even though employers were taking the lead in implementing OSH initiatives in large national organizations, the challenge remained among SMEs and the informal economy due to their reactive rather than preventative approach.

Ingrid Christensen, Country Director ILO highlighted the fact that legislation on OSH was important and that Pakistan did not yet have comprehensive laws. She further stated that legislation alone was not sufficient as these need to be implemented and enforced in true spirit.

During the consultation, participants discussed in detail the safety and health issues in the context of new legislation as well as the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in promoting a preventative safety and health culture.

Senior Joint Secretary of the Ministry of OPHRD, Noor Zaman Khan expressed the hope that the consultation would raise commitment among stakeholders to enact and comply with OSH legislation. He also cautioned that if workers’ welfare in terms of OSH was not taken care of it would prove to be counter-productive for Pakistan’s overall development.

According to ILO new global estimates 2017, there are 2.78 million fatal work-related injuries and illnesses each year. The new global estimate of the economic cost of work-related fatal and non-fatal injuries and illnesses amounts to 3.94 percent of the global GDP.
Government of Balochistan to develop Youth Employment Strategy

The ILO will support the Government of Balochistan and Prime Ministers’ Youth Programme (PMYP) in organizing a consultative workshop on Youth Employment Framework in Quetta. This is part of a series of consultations across the country aimed at devising consensus based strategies for youth employment and empowerment.

The Youth Labour Force participation rate for Balochistan (44.44%) has been historically lower compared to other provinces and there has been no youth employment strategy or policy over the last 70 years. This situation calls for a coherent and integrated Youth Employment Strategy to make visible impact.

The workshop was attended by the Government departments from Balochistan, United Nations’ agencies, Academia, Civil Society Organizations, Workers’ organizations, Youth-led organizations and the youth representing Balochistan.

In his remarks, the Chief Guest Mr. Asfandyar Khan, Secretary Planning and Development Department, Government of Balochistan said in a province like Balochistan where 1.4 million children are out of school and educational facilities are less than desirable, there was dire need to develop integrated and inclusive youth employment strategies to address these gaps. Mr. Khan shared that government of Balochistan was in the process of drafting sector development plans that needed to be considered when developing Balochistan’s provincial youth employment strategy.

Mr. Mehboob Ahmed, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Government of Balochistan shared some of the initiatives taken by the provincial government and Youth department, particularly to promote employment at provincial level.

The ILO Senior Programme Officer, Mr. Saad Gilani highlighted major issues in youth employment such as underemployment, vulnerable employment and unproductive jobs that need to be addressed. He emphasized on investing in developing policies and action plans for youth employment and to identify new avenues for Youth Employment.

ILO’s collaboration with Prime Minister Youth Programme to formulate youth employment framework is an example of on-going efforts to create decent work opportunities for youth.

Mr. Zulfiqar Durrani Head of United Nations’ Development Programme (UNDP) Sub-Office in Quetta, highlighted the on-going efforts of UNDP and other UN agencies in Balochistan.

Participants provided detailed feedback and inputs on the proposed Youth Employment Framework and endorsed the process for its implementation. Similar consultations are planned in other provinces and regions of the country in coming months.
Sialkot sports goods factories make Occupational Safety and Health a top priority

The ILO supported the Employers’ Federation of Pakistan (EFP) and the Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PSGMEA) in organizing a series of six workshops on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) from 6 -10 November 2017 in Sialkot.

The workshops enhanced awareness on OSH standards at enterprise level, focusing on the growing OSH needs of the industry and the market. In total, 187 participants representing 41 companies were sensitized and their knowledge on how to implement OSH measures in a practical fashion was strengthened.

The concluding ceremony took place on 10 of November 2017. Hasnain Cheema, Chairman, PSGMEA reiterated the need for continued support on this issue and expressed the hope that collaboration between workers and employers would be instrumental in manifesting good results and dividends for the both.

Fasihul Karim Siddiqi, Secretary General, EFP expressed hope that these efforts would lead to improving the sustainability and competitiveness of the industry in the global context.

Tsuyoshi Kawakami, Sr. Specialist on OSH from the Decent Work Technical Support Team for South Asia, New Delhi, who technically facilitated the workshops as a trainer, appreciated the active interaction between the participants who represented administration and workers. He said that it is a bilateral manifestation of commitment by the administration and the workers.

Ingrid Christensen, Director, ILO Country Office for Pakistan suggested that the good practices that had emerged during the workshops could be showcased as an inspiration for other companies in the efforts to promote sustainable and responsible business.

Other participants at the closing ceremony included Sheikh Abdul Waheed Sandal, representing the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Board of Directors of the EFP, Aftab Bajwa, District Manager Labour Sialkot, Ch. Mohammed Ashraf, President, Pakistan Workers’ Federation (PWF), Sialkot and Javaid Iqbal, representative of the Saeed A Awan Centre for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment, Lahore.

The workshops were organized under the ILO’s Project on ‘More and Better Jobs through Socially Responsible Labour Practices in Asia (Pakistan) – Phase II’, funded by the Government of Japan. The project aims to strengthen socially responsible labour practices in the sports goods industry in Sialkot and raise awareness on the principles of the Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE) Declaration.
Our right of passage should be safe migration, not leaky boats

“I’m a migrant, but didn’t have to risk my life on a leaky boat or pay traffickers. Safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite.”
Thus spoke United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, in September 2017.

With a memorable turn of phrase, he captured what is perhaps one of the overriding challenges facing the world today. While we live at a time when a privileged elite considers global mobility virtually its birthright, it is denied to the majority trapped in hopelessly bad economic or conflict circumstances. But something else has changed to bring this self-evident reality into the grinding gears of global politics with often tragic consequences.

Not long ago a sort of insider/outside code of conduct meant that what the elite got barely mattered to the global poor, who were only dimly aware of the opportunities to reach a better life beyond the confines of their country’s borders. That was then.

Today the world’s greatest leveler, the smartphone—which now is in the hands of more than 2 billion across the world—continues to change all that. In less than a decade smartphones have provided many outsiders with intimate knowledge of heretofore ‘elite’ goings on. What’s happening is that two coexisting, if starkly diverging realities are clashing on the same planet, turning the hitherto somnolent politics of many countries unpredictable and indeed volatile.

On the one hand, freedom of movement is virtually guaranteed for a privileged and surprisingly broad global citizenry, for whom it has become natural to move safely, freely and relatively inexpensively around the world. This includes tourists, students, visiting family members, migrant workers from the global south (over 2 million Filipinos and 1 million Sri Lankans etc.) as well as the businesspersons who keep our globalized world humming.

What we so easily forget in the discourse about migration is that millions are traveling in ever greater numbers. They move safely and orderly, passing through security on the way to the gate, checking Facebook feeds and instant messages as they go. And above all they move in a regular way, their passports (and visas) in hand.

So why, one might ask, has migration become such a toxic issue, leading the news headlines and providing fuel for political populism? Part of it may well lie in our brushing over the challenges of integration and being too quick to judge popular hostility towards migration as irrational or worse. Politicians ignore the values people adhere to at their peril.
Equally, if uninterrupted, global mass movements of people are seen to be so orderly, normal and beneficial for all that they do not draw comment, we will need to figure out how to cope with the majority denied mobility because of circumstances.

Hundreds of millions who are not part of the growing, truly global labor talent market find themselves outside looking in, onto a world they can only dream of. They face enormous income disparities and hardships and no chance of getting a visa or a work permit.

It comes as no surprise then that vast armies of hopeful young migrants want to climb aboard the “leaky boats” referred to by the Secretary General. Pushed by lack of economic opportunity and exacerbated by climate change, they too are vulnerable to the siren song of social media. That’s where smuggling networks, human traffickers and modern day enslavers ply their trade these days with complete impunity. These cruel deceptions go unchecked, as the social media giants chase new markets in the global south.

This is the type of migration that we see on the news and that at its worst has led to the shocking reality – first revealed by IOM - of African migrants being sold as slaves and indentured servants. As population growth and economic failure drives migrants to throw caution to the wind and leave their homes, the inevitable result is populism at the receiving end where communities are also struggling with unemployment and identity issues.

This is why I place so much hope in the Global Compact on Migration, due to be signed at the end of 2018. It’s being negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations and aims to cover international migration in a comprehensive manner. The first inter-governmental agreement of its kind, it crucially will not intrude on nation state sovereignty and will not be legally binding, probably just as well given the tinderbox nature of the subject matter.

There is a great deal of existing common ground and it hinges on the understanding that migration isn’t so much a problem to be solved as a reality to be managed. If we stop to think about the strict and mandatory rules which enable over 8 million flights per year that enable the equivalent of 44% of the world’s population to take off and land safely, it should be possible to find some common rules in order to allow many more to travel, migrate and return home freely and safely. We need to offer hope to those facing economic despair, to provide legal pathways for more migrants or circular migration options for those who wish to work and return home... because if we don’t come up with solutions the smugglers will do it for us, at great cost to human life and to the fabric of our societies.

William Swing
Director General, IOM
Engage, innovate, co-create

The energy was infectious at the National Incubation Centre, in Islamabad, where young people had gathered to design solutions for the start-up ecosystem in Pakistan. The event was the first of its kind organized by UNDP Pakistan that used design thinking: young entrepreneurs shared their challenges with stakeholders and worked with them to co-create solutions. The event was part of UNDP’s Regional Youth Co:Lab initiative, which supports young social entrepreneurs in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s ‘youth bulge’ offers a unique opportunity for socioeconomic growth as a large population of energetic, creative and tech-savvy young people can play a major role in sustainable development. Through its Youth Empowerment Programme, UNDP Pakistan is engaging thousands of young people to harness their dynamism and unlock their hidden potential, empowering them to solve their own problems. The programme utilizes design-thinking sessions to respond to young people’s needs, encouraging inclusion and innovation by making young people part of the solutions and experimenting with ideas for improved results.

Moreover, the event provided an ideal opportunity for start-ups to network with technology managers, academia, government representatives, community leaders, players from the private sector and development agencies. A series of events under the Youth Co:Lab in Peshawar, Karachi and Islamabad initiative engaged around 400 young participants throughout the country, with local gatherings in cities followed by the national event. The three local events were conducted in the form of ‘pre-sessions’ that engaged young aspiring entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, with special focus on vulnerable youth and women. The participants identified challenges and opportunities through group activities with representatives of government, start-ups and the private and development sectors. Together the groups proposed solutions for fostering a start-up ecosystem in Pakistan.

Solutions focused on addressing cultural barriers for young entrepreneurs through outreach to change mindsets and encourage young people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option; educational reforms; improved diversity; online and physical information access centres for start-ups; community financing models and an over-arching policy nurturing start-ups in Pakistan. One group proposed the development of an online portal for start-ups to access relevant information; another recommended developing an entrepreneurship-focused curriculum for school children. Yet another focused on nurturing start-ups in the health sector.

UNDP Pakistan will take forward some of these solutions as part of its programme activities in order to improve the start-up ecosystem in the country.

As the solutions proposed by the groups show, when young people are engaged in design thinking sessions, they are empowered and their creativity is harnessed for action in support of socioeconomic growth. Youth Co:Lab in Pakistan offered not only a glimpse of what an entrepreneurial young population can achieve, it gave clear ways of providing the tools for achievement.
Empowering youth through design thinking

What do young Pakistani entrepreneurs need to ease their journey to success? How can they contribute to the country's sustainable development and build a brighter future for themselves? Through design thinking, a revolutionary framework for innovation, we can envisage what can be, and chart out the actions required to achieve that future.

The first requirement is good policy. Design thinking can help us understand how policy support from the government can facilitate start-ups. Whilst Pakistan has a Youth Policy, there is a need for a policy framework that acknowledges youth-led start-ups as economic contributors and addresses the challenges they face. UNDP Pakistan has a crucial role in advocating for the cross-sectoral planning required, engaging with academia and the private sector, and amplifying the voices of entrepreneurs to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem and introduce “start-up packages” for youth entrepreneurs.

A design thinking approach can be integrated into both academic learning and professional training, helping youth analyse socioeconomic complexities and implement solutions. Young students can receive skills training to develop online applications for job matching. The possibilities are endless.

Women face significant economic exclusion and can benefit immensely from investments in entrepreneurship support. Targeted training, supportive activities and market linkages can have immense benefits for the local economy and women's empowerment. For example, UNDP's Youth Employment Project has piloted an initiative with the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), to empower 390 young women. This provides a best practice that can be replicated with a stronger focus on innovative thinking.

Today’s youth are connected through multiple channels and influence one another strongly. This is an immense advantage, offering ways to share useful knowledge and put it to good use. UNDP can provide youth with a knowledge-sharing platform to showcase best practices and create a dialogue that could lead to viable solutions to address youth issues, led by youth. Similar platforms could be developed for all stakeholders in an entrepreneurial ecosystem to share ideas, discuss challenges and devise solutions. Supporting research can fill knowledge gaps and open space for innovation.

Without financial muscle it is difficult for start-ups to survive. This muscle may be harnessed through financial knowledge and assistance and strong links with investors. UNDP can establish linkages between investors and entrepreneurs; strengthen university incubation centres and link youth with available funding such as SDG innovation funds. UNDP can also provide competitive funding awards, mobilize resources and work on a cost-sharing basis to introduce programmes like the Prime Minister's Youth Loans.
A nationwide art competition to promote SDGs launched

A nationwide competition for fine arts students aimed at promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was formally launched in four locations: at the Vali Muhammad (VM) Art Gallery in Karachi; the National Council of the Arts in Islamabad; the Nishtar Hall in Peshawar; and National College of Arts in Lahore.

The Curator at Art Basel, Hong Kong and Executive Director of Artspace Sydney, Alexie Glass-Kantor, delivered lectures at all locations on the role of young people in development and the potential of culture as a medium for overcoming ethnic and religious barriers.

Jointly organized by the Embassy of Switzerland and the UN Information Centre in partnership with several other organizations, the competition titled ‘We the Peoples, We the Arts’ was first launched in 2016. It involved students of five leading art schools across Pakistan, who produced sculptures, paintings and miniature paintings, highlighting the theme of Zero Hunger; the second SDG. In its second edition fine arts students aged 18 and above enrolled in accredited Pakistani colleges and universities were invited to participate and produce art in four categories. The thematic areas have also been expanded to include all 17 SDGs.

The launch events were attended by a large number of fine arts students, the Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Thomas Kolly; Swiss Embassy’s Deputy Head of Mission Bernhard Furger; the Head of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Stefanie Burri; and Deputy Director of Artspace Sydney Michelle Newton.

Alexie Glass-Kantor highly praised the ‘We the Peoples, We the Arts’ initiative that is aimed at inspiring emerging artists to consider how they can use art as an instrument to consider unique perspectives and solutions to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Head of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Stefanie Burri said that they are proud to launch the second edition of this competition and bringing it to more young people across Pakistan, and that youth have a responsibility to stand up for development and peace.

An international jury will judge the submissions in two phases. Twenty-four finalists (six from each category) will be pre-selected. In the second phase, one winner from each category will be selected at an award-ceremony planned to be held in Islamabad, in May 2018. Each of the four winners will be awarded US$ 500. Artworks from all the 24 finalists will also be featured in a high-quality catalogue and will be exhibited across Pakistan.

The competition will give visibility to Pakistani artists and their work in Switzerland, Australia and other countries.
Message by the United Nations Secretary-General on World AIDS Day

01 December 2017

The world is well on its way to meeting the target of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Nearly 21 million people living with HIV now have access to treatment — a number that should grow to more than 30 million by 2020. AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections are declining. There is great hope that the world can deliver on its promise — but much more needs to be done. Sadly, some parts of the response to HIV are lagging behind. In some regions of the world, hard-won successes are being reversed, with rising numbers of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV, particularly in Africa. Men are less likely to know that they are living with the virus, less likely to seek treatment for it, and more likely to transmit HIV as a result. Too many people are unable to access the services they need to treat their illness or to stay healthy.

On this World AIDS Day, I call for a renewed commitment to finish what we have started and to make the AIDS epidemic a thing of the past.

Commemoration of World Aids Day 2017

World AIDS Day was observed with more than 150 people attending the main event. The government of Pakistan pledged to increase awareness about AIDS: how to prevent it and to set aside the preconceptions that come with this disease.

Each year, the epidemic claims the lives of a large number of people globally. Pakistan also faces a challenge in combating this disease. Remarks were given by Honorable Secretary Health, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination and he assured his full determination by the Government, health practitioners NGOs and the people to prevent HIV infections and ensure access to safe, effective, and affordable quality medicines and diagnostics and related health commodities as well as healthcare services.

A short documentary was presented to highlight the epidemiological situation and how people face stigma and discrimination in the country once diagnosed with HIV. Speeches were also made by Acting UN Resident Coordinator, the NACP Programme Manager, the Country Director UNAIDS, and the WHO Country Representative. Panel discussions were held with panelists including NACP, WHO, UNAIDS, Secretary Health Balochistan, APLHIV and transgender community representatives. It was stressed that effectively combating HIV/AIDS requires everyone to have equal access to information about preventive measures and available treatment programs. It calls for concerted efforts involving the parents, teachers, religious scholars, media and every segment of society, to work together and thereby save millions from the consequences of the disease. The event was concluded with a theatre performance on the basics of HIV transmission, prevention and testing.
Pakistan signed HIV declaration

On 30 November 2017, Saira Afzal Tarar, Honourable Federal Minister, Pakistan’s Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination; Naveed Kamran Baloch, Honourable Federal Secretary, Pakistan’s Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination; and all the four Provincial Health Secretaries signed a remarkable declaration aiming to end the HIV and AIDS epidemic by 2030.

The event was also attended by United Nations agencies, government representatives, people living with HIV, key populations and media.

The declaration states: “We the undersigned hereby reaffirm our support to the 2016 Political Declaration by the UN General Assembly on HIV and AIDS. The government of Pakistan commits bold strategies, aimed at ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030. The Ministry reaffirms its support on the eve of World AIDS Day 2017 to end AIDS by 2030, end stigma and discrimination attached to this epidemic and commit our full support towards Zero AIDS-related death. We recognize the potentially devastating consequences of the rapid spread of HIV and AIDS on social, cultural, economic and developmental prospects in the context of Sustainable Development Goals. Government pledges to continue prioritizing the implementation of the Pakistan AIDS Strategy 2017-2021 and also expand Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) coverage, with an emphasis on testing and treatment of the key population, and elimination of Mother to Child Transmission”.

HIV AND AIDS

SPECIAL FEATURE

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Pakistan signed HIV declaration
Joining hands to ensure an HIV and AIDS-free Pakistan

Pakistan joins the rest of the world in observing World AIDS Day 2017. This day is aimed at increasing awareness, fighting stigma and discrimination and educating people regarding HIV. The theme of this year is ‘Right to Health’. Moreover, it would be advantageous to take AIDS out of isolation, HIV prevention and treatment needs to be delivered in all dimensions of programming, including service delivery, demand generation and support for treatment adherence.

At the end of the year 2017, the Government has marked more intensified, coordinated and integrated approaches to address HIV and AIDS-related issues by implementing Pakistan AIDS Strategy III 2015-2020. The government of Pakistan is committed to adopting a fast-track approach in order to end AIDS by 2030. It is crucial to understand that no effort in this regard will meet success unless there is a significant change in the behaviour of the population. It is imperative for our citizens to understand that any person affected by HIV and AIDS has the right to live like any other citizen of the country. A change in attitude is required to shift from rejection of a patient to the rejection of the disease. Despite significant progress in the past two years, challenges persist. Focus on improving HIV testing and increasing access to HIV treatment for people living with HIV remains a priority for Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination. Evidence-informed and human rights-based prevention programmes are the need of the hour for key population and these include dedicated services, community mobilization and empowerment.

I am proud to be a part of this campaign and take this opportunity to stress upon my fellow compatriots to join hands in defeating the disease. I believe it is the duty of each citizen of this country to ensure that Pakistan becomes HIV and AIDS-free.

H.E Saira Afzal Tarar
Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination
Joint coordination and concentrated efforts imperatives in the fight against HIV and AIDS

AIDS is far from eradicated and World AIDS Day is a reminder that the world continues to face this challenge. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination is at the forefront in mobilizing resources, and advocating for the cause of prevention and control of this fatal disease.

If a significant effort is to be made in making AIDS a disease of the past, collective efforts, innovative approaches, evidence-based programming and human rights-based initiatives by all stakeholders are required. Bringing together the capabilities and capacities of all stakeholders would help build synergies in the fight against the disease. Equal access to prevention, treatment, care and support is of vital importance. Every effort is being made to provide a network of free testing and treatment facilities across the country. This theme of ‘Right to Health’ reflects the importance of everyone’s role and calls for each of us to take responsibility to prevent new HIV infections. Through community mobilization for voluntary HIV testing and counselling and scaling up treatment coverage, we can reach all groups and individuals with HIV services.

Our Ministry is committed to achieving universal access to Antiretroviral Therapy to benefit people in Pakistan. I would like to call upon community leaders to support comprehensive prevention programmes and get involved in every aspect of the HIV and AIDS response. I call upon families and parents to lead by example and support children as they go through the difficult stages of development. I call upon the youth to become involved in all aspects of the HIV response. Only through concerted and coordinated efforts will we as a society be able to defeat HIV and AIDS.

Naveed Kamran Baloch, Secretary
Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination
Fast tracking HIV response to bridge the gap between people who have access to HIV support services and people who are being left behind

Pakistan has followed the epidemic pattern typically seen elsewhere in Asia, i.e., shifting from low HIV prevalence to high prevalence concentrated among certain key populations at higher risk. Pakistan continues to have a concentrated HIV epidemic with an estimated prevalence among the general population at less than 0.1 percent. Geographically it is estimated that 93 percent of people living with HIV (n = 133,299) are to be found in two provinces in the country; Punjab (50%) and Sindh (43%).

The epidemic is concentrated among key populations, prevalently in People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), who account for an estimated 43,554 of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHA), and have an estimated prevalence rate of 38.4 percent. However, while the growth in HIV prevalence among PWID is now plateauing, the prevalence growth rates in other key populations, for whom the main transmission route is sexual, is increasing.

The Sustainable Development Goals, underpinned by human rights, provide a framework to leverage opportunities between the right to health and other rights, including the right to education, equality, non-discrimination, access to justice, privacy and food. Learning from the AIDS response, the World AIDS Day campaign will focus on the right to health, highlighting opportunities to leverage rights-based practices and behaviours to achieve more rapid and sustainable progress towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. World AIDS Day 2017 provides us the opportunity to remind the public and Government that HIV has not gone away and that collectively, there is the need to increase knowledge and awareness, fight prejudice and develop appropriately funded programmes to maintain and achieve the aims and objectives of the country as set out in the National and provincial AIDS Strategic Plan.

Addressing stigma and discrimination is an exceedingly important aspect of mitigating the effects of HIV.

Stigma and discrimination are not only harmful for PLHIV and their families, but also lead to undesirable health behaviours that may aid the spread of HIV. Furthermore, stigma and discrimination dissuade any potentially-exposed individuals from accessing testing. On the whole, these effects limit the success of any HIV intervention in both treatment and prevention.

The National AIDS Control Programme along with WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, The Global Fund, Partner Organization, Civil Society, Political and Religious opinion leaders along with media could play an imperative role to fast-track our actions and close the gap between people who have access to HIV prevention, treatment care, and support services and people who are being left behind.

To do this we need to ensure that health systems are strengthened to provide the essential services that are needed. On World AIDS Day 2017 it is time to redouble our efforts, to fast-track our actions and close the gap.

**Dr. Baseer Khan Achakzai**
National Programme Manager, National AIDS Control Programme
Ending HIV/AIDS epidemic: an unparalleled opportunity to change the course of history forever

On this World AIDS Day, we would like to give the message of ‘My Right to Health’. The world has committed to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. We need to Fast-Track the response, including the renewed commitment to, sustained funding for and scaled-up implementation of HIV prevention programmes.

Combination prevention, including comprehensive sexuality education, economic empowerment and access to sexual and reproductive health services for young women and adolescent girls and their male partners in high-prevalence locations is key to prevent new infections among key population and vulnerable groups in Pakistan. Evidence-informed and human rights-based prevention programmes for key populations, including dedicated services and community mobilization and empowerment is key to success when it comes to strengthening HIV response at all levels. This ambitious yet wholly attainable objective represents an unparalleled opportunity to change the course of history forever, something our generation must do for the generations to come.

When it comes to managing the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Pakistan; prevention is still the ultimate priority and it is essential that each person living with the disease specifically key populations and fragile communities receives the care and support without stigma and discrimination that they deserve from all key stakeholders. Through this approach, we can bring health, equality, social justice and dignity for all key populations in Pakistan. We need concrete steps towards reduction of stigma and discrimination reduction in healthcare settings.

Resources will continue to diminish and the need to show a return on investment will be stronger than ever before. And with no reduction in the increasing number of new HIV infections in Pakistan, we need to realize that if there will become a generalized epidemic with sexual multi-partner transmission of HIV, the epidemic will become impossible to control. This is the right time to have comprehensive rights-based multi-sectoral strategies on HIV prevention at the provincial level where we need to jointly upscale testing among key populations. Expanding civil society spaces requires ensuring that all people can contribute to the policies and decisions that affect their lives, including the most excluded and discriminated against. We all need to take urgent and immediate action to close the prevention gap, upscale testing and treatment, reduce stigma and discrimination and focus on community empowerment.

Dr. Mamadou L. Sakho
Country Director, UNAIDS for Pakistan and Afghanistan

Ending HIV/AIDS epidemic: an unparalleled opportunity to change the course of history forever
Launching Pakistan Transgender Empowerment Association

WHO is supporting the national response to HIV/AIDS in the country through:
- Development of new HIV Testing and treatment guidelines; building capacity of health care providers;
- Providing technical guidance on expansion of HIV Testing and Treatment services, making it accessible to those who need it; developing a national strategy on improving access of vulnerable and key population to HIV Testing and Treatment services; and building a surveillance system for monitoring of ARV resistance among the HIV positive clients on treatment.

WHO strongly advocates for equitable access of all to HIV preventive and treatment services, and elimination of all sort of stigma and discrimination in the health care setting, hindering access of people living with HIV/AIDS to life saving treatment services.

In addition WHO is working closely with the national and the provincial AIDS control program and call upon Governments, civil society, private sector and technical partners to commit on: Making HIV testing and treatment services available and easily accessible, particularly for vulnerable and key population groups at risk of HIV, through expanding the existing testing and treatment centers; equitable access of all vulnerable and key population to the health services; uninterrupted provision of HIV preventive services for the key population and its linkages with care and treatment for those who need it.

WHO is supporting Government to eliminate stigma and discrimination within the health sector, including for people living with HIV, to ensure no one living with, or at risk of HIV, is left behind. WHO is available to provide technical support for integration among HIV-related programs to save lives and achieve Universal Health Coverage.

Dr. Muhammad Assai Ardakani
Representative, WHO Pakistan
Drug use, HIV and women at risk: accessible HIV prevention, treatment and care services in prisons and communities

Imprisoned women and women injecting drugs often lack adequate gender-sensitive health services and are at high risk of HIV and other blood-borne infections. Under its Country Programme II, UNODC assists the Government of Pakistan to reduce drug use and HIV prevalence by supporting programmes focusing on high-risk populations. During a one-year extension phase of the FIDU project, comprehensive harm reduction services were established in two female prisons in Karachi and Hyderabad and in a community setting in Karachi in Sindh province. Women face complex challenges during their imprisonment and their needs for psychological, social and health care services are drastically different than those of men. To respond to this challenge, Sukkar Blood and Drugs Donating Society (SBDDS) was hired to provide services in female prisons. Over five hundred female prisoners were registered for harm reduction services and over four hundred were counseled for their psychosocial issues. Moreover, sessions on HIV/AIDS prevention, health hygiene, sexually transmitted infections, stress coping skills, and counselling and testing services were attended by several hundred female inmates.

In community settings, Al-Nejat Welfare Society implemented harm reduction services for females who inject drugs and spouses of people who inject drugs; almost two hundred women were registered for harm reduction services and over three hundred attended motivational counseling for drug treatment. As part of the initiative, health education sessions, STI treatment and testing services were provided. The results are encouraging: no one was found positive for HIV.

The project implementing partner organizations work closely with provincial AIDS control programmes, prison authorities and civil society organizations to ensure uninterrupted HIV prevention, treatment and care services – with a common view that essential medical and drug treatment services should be easily accessible and cover all groups in need.

Cesar Guedes
Country Representative UNODC
Pakistan
Two seminars on HIV and AIDS were organized to raise awareness among youth on HIV modes of transmission, prevention and testing. These events were held in connection with World AIDS Day, celebrated on 1 December every year. The first lecture was organized by the National AIDS Control Programme for the students at Bahria University, and saw the participation of 90 students. Along with talking about the epidemic and addressing the stigma that those living with HIV/AIDS face, the talk also provided evidence-based information to students. Speakers who included UNAIDS Country Director Mamadou L. Sakho, the National Programme Manager of NACP Dr. Baseer Khan Achakzai, and WHO Representative in Pakistan D. Assai Ardakani, highlighted that the focus on educating youth is important, as students are the future of the country and constitute a majority of its population. They said there is a pressing need to enable them to be agents of change.

Sofia Furqan, Senior Programme Officer, NACP, gave a detailed presentation on HIV/AIDS and National Coordinator Asghar Satti spoke on the role of the Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS, mentioning that community mobilization was instrumental to raise awareness and eliminate misconceptions associated with HIV/AIDS.

The second lecture was organized at Fizayia Medical College, and saw the participation of 175 students. Here too, vibrant and rich discussions were held, clearing misconceptions associated to how the virus can be contracted, prevented and treated, and students were able to voice their questions in a Q&A session.

There are promising trends: the global HIV epidemic has caused less deaths in 2015 than in almost 20 years, and prevention programmes have reduced the number of new HIV infections by 35 percent from 2000 to 2015. Antiretroviral therapy availability has reduced the number of HIV-related deaths to approximately 1.1 million in 2015, 45 percent fewer than in 2005. WHO, UNAIDS and NACP are working together for the prevention and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

World leaders have set the 2020 fast track targets to accelerate HIV response and to end AIDS by 2030.

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**“HIV is a very important Public Health Problem worldwide. I think we have to tackle this problem seriously, so that it does not become a serious problem for us. We can play a big role by creating awareness among the masses about the prevention of this disease. If we educate the masses on what the virus is and how it is spread, instead of being afraid of the problem they will know how to tackle and prevent it.”**

**Professor Major General Salman Ali**

Professor of Pediatrics and Principle of Fazaia Medical College Islamabad at Air University

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**“It’s very informative because a lot of people treat HIV as a taboo and they don’t really like to talk about it. So here when we sit together and do, it gives us awareness that it’s not bad to talk about it. It’s a disease and it should be treated like a disease.”**

Zoha

Student, Bahria University Islamabad
Healthcare providers advised to promote HIV testing

Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV (PLHIV) and those at increased risk of transmission are still unremitting in Pakistan. In addition to social rejection and exclusion, they often endure rejection and denial of care in healthcare settings. HIV related stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings in the country undermine the highest attainable standard of health for all. Three awareness raising seminars were organized at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS); the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Poly-Clinic Hospital to motivate healthcare providers to work collectively towards addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination and to devise joint recommendations for ending discrimination in a healthcare settings.

More than 115 health care providers in PIMS, 90 health care providers at CDA Hospital and more than 100 health care providers in Poly Clinic hospital attended the sessions.

At the event at PIMS, Rizwan Qazi from the institute welcomed the guests and gave a presentation on PIMS success stories. The Manager of the National AIDS Control Programme Baseer Khan Achakzai highlighted that in order to reach ARV treatment for everyone, just a little change in thinking and behavior to avoid stigma and discrimination is required. He suggested it is the job of healthcare providers to encourage HIV positive individuals to get tested and treated, mentioning that treatment is every individual’s basic right.

WHO Representative in Pakistan Assai Ardakani mentioned the progress achieved in HIV surveillance, prevention, treatment and care. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of PLHIV receiving antiretroviral treatment increased steadily to more than double. However Pakistan is still facing a huge gap in diagnosis, with only 3 out of 10 people living with HIV knowing their HIV status.

Country Director Mamadou L. Sakho said HIV related stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings in Pakistan impedes access to services and impairs the accessibility to quality health service delivery.

Senior Programme Officer in NACP Quaid Saeed presented the results of the latest HIV surveillance survey carried out in 2016, which show that HIV in Pakistan is concentrated in People Who Inject Drugs, with rising levels among Female Sex Workers and Transgender individuals.

Ms. Fahmida from UNAIDS said stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings may include denial of healthcare services to key population and unjust behaviors to service provision, lack of respect, and behaviors that stop people living with HIV and AIDS and key populations from availing testing and treatment services. The seminar ended with a question-answer session.

“Get yourself tested and treated before it is too late. We cannot stigmatize or discriminate people on the basis of this epidemic.”

Dr Rizwan Qazi
Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad

“We are treating PLHIV in collaboration with the center at PIMS hospital. We have all the facilities to screen for HIV. Our facility is open for everyone.”

Dr Ghazala Murtaza
Capital Development Authority Hospital, Islamabad
Addressing stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS and key populations

Rampant stigma and discrimination including in health care settings, and very limited access to HIV testing services continue to compromise the efforts to reduce new infections and provide people living with HIV with care and treatment services that save their lives.

Pakistan is among those countries in the Asia Pacific region where new HIV infections are increasing rapidly. The recent Integrated Biological and Behavioural Survey 2016-2017 shows a high level of stigma and discrimination against key populations living with high risk behaviors, hampering their access to social services.

Discrimination takes many forms; it violates the most fundamental human rights protected in international treaties and in national laws and the constitution. Discrimination in health care settings is directed towards key populations and people living with HIV and AIDS, the very populations that Government of Pakistan promised to prioritize through the 2030 Agenda, and who are all too often excluded or left behind. Lack of stigma-free access to HIV testing services seriously compromises the right to health of people at risk of HIV and specifically when it comes to women, transgender, young and adolescent people.

HIV testing is a gateway to HIV prevention, treatment and care. Without knowing their HIV status, key populations and people with high risk behaviors cannot get access to lifesaving treatment and continue to unknowingly transmit the infection to others.

In order to address stigma and discrimination, it is extremely important to create an enabling environment through legal reforms that can remove barriers in terms of accessibility to health and HIV services and ensure that appropriate laws, policies and programmes, including those related to HIV, are adopted towards the full realization of the rights of all.

Pakistan is currently working on two bills i.e., Islamabad Capital Territory and Punjab and both bills needs to be tabled in respective assemblies to ensure stigma free access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment services. Meanwhile, in parallel, it is also important to engage communities at every step of design, discussion, planning and implementation to ensure services are available at their doorsteps through community led and rights based programming.

We need to Fast-Track our efforts through joint collaboration. To address stigma and discrimination in health care settings, it is extremely important to engage with health care facilities that will help the Government and the United Nations in disseminating basic information pertaining to HIV. Such national and provincial affirmative actions will help Government of Pakistan to meet global commitments and contribute effectively towards Sustainable Development Goals.

**Fahmida Iqbal Khan**
Community Mobilization and Networking Advisor- UNAIDS Country Office for Pakistan and Afghanistan;

**Sadia Atta Mehmood**
Programme and Technical Analyst UNFPA Country Office Pakistan;

**Dr. Safdar Kamal Pasha**
National Consultant for HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis, World Health Organization Pakistan
HIV diagnosis and treatment remains a dilemma despite availability of tools

Today, more than ever before, the world is better equipped to fast track its response to the HIV epidemic. Yet, bringing solutions within the reach of people who need them remains a dilemma in Pakistan, which faces a huge gap in diagnosis and treatment. Only 3 out of 10 People Living With HIV (PLHIV) know their HIV status and only 7 percent of the estimated people living with HIV/AIDS are getting lifesaving anti-retroviral medicines.

World AIDS Day is observed every 1 December, with the aim to devise strategies to tackle HIV. Even though advancements in HIV testing and treatment have enabled PLHIV to lead healthy lives, wide gaps still exist between PLHIV and those accessing HIV treatment, as well as between preventive and support services. These challenges call for increased resource mobilization, promotion of HIV literacy, and PLHIV empowerment.

In Pakistan the National Aids Control Programme is spearheading the HIV response in the country with 26 HIV treatment centres and 21 Community Home-Based Care Sites. These centres provide free HIV treatment, testing, counselling as well as social support to PLHIV. In 2016, as many as 8,888 PLHIV were provided free ARVs and the number had increased to around 11,080 in September 2017. With a modified community-based prevention and testing approach, and adoption of WHO guidelines of ‘Treatment for All,’ NACP expects the number to further rise.

The challenge in Pakistan is compounded by limited availability of HIV testing and treatment services, inappropriate approaches to service delivery for people who are at risk of HIV, reluctance of healthcare providers to offer an HIV test to their clients, and stigma and discrimination. Additionally, testing the partners of PLHIV has long been neglected or has been practiced in an unethical manner, deterring people from screening.

Even though some progress has been achieved, the epidemic is still progressing. Pakistan features the lowest coverage of HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services among regional countries. Over 85 percent of PLHIV who need life-saving antiretroviral therapy do not receive it, making HIV testing a critical step for accessing HIV treatment and care.

Driven by global commitments spearheaded by the UN, the global health community has committed to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the SDGs. The target, however, cannot be met without breaking intra-organizational silos. Synergies must be developed between all sectors contributing to the health of the population. An efficacious, evidence-based and innovative approach needs to be adopted to increase coverage and access to HIV information, prevention, as well as testing and treatment services.

Shahina Maqbool
Senior Health Correspondent,
The News International
The Pakistan Transgender Empowerment Association was launched as ‘Voice of Social Change and Equity’ at a World AIDS Day event, where more than 90 transgender attended from across the country including all the four provinces. The aim of this launch was to mobilize and unite the gender and sexual minorities for the development of best practices and support policies nationwide that promote better initiatives, health system research mechanisms, right to education, living with dignity and fostering respect for transgender, intersex, and gender-variant people in all cultural settings. We believe that transgender people have the resilience, brilliance, and power to transform society.

Across the world, transgender people experience high levels of stigma, discrimination, gender-based violence and abuse, marginalization and social exclusion. A transgender individual in Pakistan faces multilayer social and legal discrimination. It is aimed that this initiative would bring prosperity in the life of TGs in Pakistan, to make their voices heard by those who can support them, in order to get empowered. The community must advocate for universal access to health, social services, education, employment, and rule of law and accountability mechanisms and the people should understand that Transgender people are part of this community. Practicing of safer sex should be advocated within the transgender community. It is the need of time for the reinvigoration of HIV prevention among key populations requires domestic investment in tools that can empower them to raise their voice for their rights, and this association will definitely be one such platform which will help strengthen the voice and agency role of transgender community. Pakistan is championing the response to HIV and making progress towards protecting the rights of the transgender community. This association will help further strengthen the capacities of this community to access universal health coverage and HIV testing treatment, care and social support services. The event was one of a series of activities organized in connection with the World AIDS Day joint commemoration.

“People are surprised when they hear about this taboo topic. I am of the view that when we celebrate a day it means that the issue is present in our lives in some way or the other: we are not supposed to be afraid of it, we have to face it. We have to do the treatment when we get to know about this epidemic, we have to love the people who are going through depression during this difficult time. We should not add up to their difficulties but love them. Difficult times and health issues are a part of life, we never know who’s next in line.”

Bubbly Malik
Executive Director, Wajood
Dialogue with community on National Coalition for HIV Prevention

On the eve of World AIDS Day, the APLHIV in collaboration with NACP, UN-AIDS Pakistan and Afghanistan used the opportunity to de-brief the community representatives from APLHIV, DUNE, POFEN and Y-Chapter on the matters related to launch of Global Coalition on HIV prevention. Recently a roadmap was developed in Geneva that provides the basis for a country led movement to scale up HIV prevention programs as part of Fast Tracking- a comprehensive response to meet global and national targets and commitments by 2030. A 10 point plan for accelerating HIV prevention at country level was also approved at the Geneva meeting. The participants from the above-mentioned networks were informed of this action plan. A set of recommendation were also developed as result of this de-briefing session to translate this plan into action at country level and also to launch the Coalition at the country level.
Pakistan adopts strategy for optimizing HIV treatment

Pakistan faces a concentrated and gradually expanding HIV epidemic mainly among key risk populations like People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) and among Male Sex Workers (mainly Transgender TGs) and/or Hijra sex workers (HSWs). With an estimated 133,179 People Living with HIV (PLHIV), the nation harbors more than one third of estimated HIV Positive population in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. More than half of new HIV infections in the region during 2017 occurred in the country alone. An estimation exercise conducted in 2017 showed that there are approximately 19,000 new HIV infections per year and that people who inject drugs were contributing to the bulk of new HIV infections. The model predicted an increasing prevalence of HIV in all key population groups, including transgender persons and especially men who have sex with men (MSM).

Data from 26 HIV Treatment centers (June 2017) indicates that just 14.0 percent (n=18,868) of estimated number of PLHIV are currently registered PLHIV, and even fewer 7.1 percent (n=9,275) are receiving lifesaving HIV Treatment. Common reasons for low case numbers and identification are low awareness of HIV status and testing of key populations; prevailing socio-structural taboos that undermine access to information to voluntary testing and outreach to those most at risk; socio-cultural taboos mainly including stigma and discrimination and lack of robust home-community-facility based models of care and referrals. In order to overcome low treatment coverage, the country has now adopted WHO ‘Treat-all’ approach—recommending antiretroviral therapy (ART), for everyone living with HIV at any CD4 cell count. Commonly known as ‘Test and Treat’, the approach begins patients on ART immediately after an HIV-positive diagnosis in an effort to improve health outcomes, in terms of preventing the progression of disease and reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

The Treat All strategy has the additional benefit of helping to curb HIV new infections. Commonly referred to as ‘Treatment as Prevention’ HIV Treatment can help reducing HIV viral load in body fluids to an ‘undetectable level’ (viral suppression), and helps preventing HIV transmission to those who are not infected. WHO Pakistan is providing technical and financial support to the national and the provincial AIDS control, for expansion of HIV treatment service delivery through introducing the WHO model for ‘Differentiated Care for HIV Treatment’. This implies HIV treatment centres will be decentralized to peripheral health facilities, to the district level, where most of key populations and PLHIVs reside. This would make the treatment more accessible to those who need it and also improve their adherence to treatment.
“United Nations Secretary General António Guterres is focusing to bring reforms in the UN to make it a force that can prevent war, inequality and intolerance”.

This was stated by UN Resident Coordinator to Pakistan Neil Buhne, in an interview with the News and Current Affairs Channel of Radio Pakistan on the occasion of International Day for Tolerance.

Neil Buhne emphasized the need to promote education, development and justice, in order to address the issue of intolerance from societies.

The UN Resident Coordinator admitted that some positive changes are happening in Pakistan. He said he has recently been to Waziristan, where it was encouraging to see a renewed focus on early childhood education, including that of the girls.

He also mentioned that although Pakistan has made tremendous progress within the education sector, many of the children are out of school. He said that emphasis should be given to the quality of education, in order to enroll out-of-school children and then retain them.

Speaking on the occasion, Country Director UNESCO Vibeke Jensen said that more efforts need to be done to promote tolerance in the world today. She said there should be a focus on inclusion, to bring everyone into mainstream development.

The country director of UNESCO pointed out that it is the first time that the sustainable development goals adopted a couple of years back envisage steps for inclusion and respect for diversity.

Mr. Buhne and Ms. Jensen said the media also has an important role to play in promoting tolerance in communities. Media should not promote hate speech but a greater understanding and tolerance.
An Exclusive television Interview of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Pakistan Representative and Country Director Finbarr Curran was telecasted on the PTV World programme ‘Diplomatic Enclave’ on 9 December. The Country Director spoke about what WFP has achieved in 2017, and the way forward for 2018.

Finbarr Curran spoke about the programmes and initiatives of WFP as the world’s largest humanitarian and development agency, delivering food assistance during emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. He highlighted WFP’s support to the Government of Pakistan and other stakeholders to achieve Food and Nutrition Security under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2: ‘Zero Hunger’ and 17: ‘Partnerships for the Goals’, and enhancing their capacity in the areas of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Disaster Risk Management (DDM), Storage and data Management.

The discussion also encompassed how WFP has positioned its presence in KP and all seven agencies of FATA to support the displaced population by providing them with food rations since the onset of emergency of Temporarily Displaced Persons (TDPs).

Since 2008, WFP has provided food assistance through a school-feeding programme to over one million students in 4,000 schools in the KP and FATA region. Under this initiative, WFP is providing school children with nutritious snacks during school to help them focus and learn better.

Complete interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2MZFghgj0&t=25s
In just the past few weeks, a renowned investigative journalist was murdered by a bomb that booby-trapped her car; another was dismembered in the course of researching her story; and a photojournalist was found dead after being forced to leave his home at gunpoint.

From 2006 to 2016, 930 journalists and media workers were killed. Thousands of others routinely face sexual harassment, intimidation, detention and ill treatment. Rampant impunity then compounds the crimes. In nine out of ten cases, the perpetrators are never brought to justice.

When journalists are targeted, societies as a whole also pay the price. The kind of news that gets silenced - corruption, conflicts of interest, illegal trafficking - is exactly the kind of information the public needs to know.

The United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council have all condemned attacks against journalists and called for ensuring their safety. The United Nations system has also endorsed a Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

We are committed to helping to create the environment journalists need to perform their vital work. I am mobilizing a network of focal points from throughout the UN system to propose specific steps to intensify our efforts to enhance the safety of journalists and media workers. On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, I call for justice -- in memory of all journalists who have been killed, and in recognition of the importance of free and independent media in advancing development and peace.

International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists
2 November 2017

Every woman and every girl has the right to a life free of violence. Yet this rupture of human rights occurs in a variety of ways in every community, particularly affecting those who are most marginalized and vulnerable. Around the world, more than 1 in

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
25 November 2017
3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lives; 750 million women were married before age 18, and more than 250 million have undergone Female Genital Mutilation. Women’s rights activists are being targeted at alarming levels, and violence against women impedes progress on women’s civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. It is now widely recognized that violence against women, including harassment and harmful practices, are major barriers to the fulfillment of human rights, and a direct challenge to women’s inclusion and participation in sustaining peace. Without tackling this, we will never fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is time to further our collective action to end violence against women and girls for good. That takes all of us working together in our own countries, regions and communities, at the same time, towards the same goal. The United Nations is addressing violence against women in many ways, including the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against women; the ‘Spotlight Initiative’ with the European Union to connect our efforts with those of national governments and civil society; and the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative.

In addition, my zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment in the United Nations is part of the Strategy on Gender Parity that was launched in September. We have also committed to continuing the ‘UNITE to End Violence against Women’ Campaign, under the new title ‘UNITE by 2030’.

It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from harassment, harmful practices, and all other forms of violence. On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us remove physical and cultural barriers, build resilient societies and create opportunities that truly leave no one behind.

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International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all

3 December 2017

Resilience is central to achieving sustainable development. In its pledge to leave no one behind, the 2030 Agenda embodies a commitment to building the capacities of those who face marginalization and exclusion, in order to reduce their vulnerability to economic, social and environmental shocks.

In recent years, the international community has achieved notable progress in advancing the rights of the world’s one billion persons with disabilities. Disability is recognized as a crosscutting issue in the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Yet, persons with disabilities remain too often excluded from the design, planning and implementation of policies and programmes that have an impact on their lives. Too often they face discrimination in labour markets and in access to education and other services.

To overcome this challenge, the path towards inclusive, accessible, usable facilities, technologies, infrastructure, services and products must be ensured by, for and with persons with disabilities. We must build on their agency, working together to design, develop and implement affordable and innovative solutions to realize equality for all.

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International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime

Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all

9 December 2017

Throughout history and still today, genocide has inflicted profound and painful losses on all humanity. In 1948, with the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Member States recognized a common interest and duty to safeguard groups from threats to their very existence. Coming so soon after the Holocaust and the Second World War, the Convention embodied a collective determination to protect people from brutality and to
prevent any future such horror. Genocide does not happen by accident; it is deliberate, with warning signs and precursors. Often it is the culmination of years of exclusion, denial of human rights and other wrongs. Since genocide can take place in times of war and in times of peace, we must be ever vigilant. Despite the clear definition of genocide in the Convention, as well as our improved understanding of the risks, genocide has recurred, multiple times. We are still reacting rather than preventing, and acting only when it is often too late. We must do more to respond early and keep violence from escalating. This is the obligation of the State parties to the Convention, one and all.

Although the Convention foresaw the possibility of punishment, it is only in the past two decades that individual perpetrators have been held accountable in an international court of law. The 69th anniversary of the Genocide Convention coincides with the upcoming closure of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the first international criminal tribunal with jurisdiction over genocide. The convictions and jurisprudence of the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as well as the on-going work of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and the International Criminal Court, reflect welcome resolve to punish this crime of all crimes.

As we commemorate the dignity of the victims of genocide, we should also commit to ensuring that affected communities are able to tell their stories, create a historical record of what happened and, in appropriate cases, receive reparations. We must also do more to shelter and protect those fleeing from armed conflict or persecution, and to speak out against hatred of all kinds.

I call upon all States to ratify the Genocide Convention by its 70th anniversary in 2018 and, in so doing, help liberate humanity from this cruel and odious crime.

International Migrants Day 18 December 2017

On International Migrants Day, we recognize the contributions and celebrate the vitality of the world’s 258 million migrants. Evidence overwhelmingly shows that migrants generate economic, social and cultural benefits for societies everywhere. Yet hostility towards migrants is unfortunately growing around the world. Solidarity with migrants has never been more urgent.

Migration has always been with us. From time immemorial, people have moved in search of new opportunities and better lives. Climate change, demographics, instability, growing inequalities and aspirations for a better life – as well as unmet needs in labour markets – mean it is here to stay.

We need effective international cooperation in managing migration to ensure that its benefits are most widely distributed and that human rights of all concerned are properly protected – as recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Last year, world leaders committed to adopting a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018. As we look ahead, let us commit to making migration work for all.
PHOTO ALBUM
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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 and 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.

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