

# Media Update

11 July 2018

## UNFPA

Press Release



## Importance of Family Planning Reiterated on World Population Day

ISLAMABAD, 11 July 2018: Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world with 208 million people and a population growth rate of 2.4% per year. The rising population numbers are likely to outstrip developmental gains, and continue to adversely affect the economy, environment, health, education and quality of the lives of all citizens.

The theme for this year's World Population Day -- '*Family Planning as a Human Right*'-- is apt for Pakistan at this crucial moment in time. The theme is in line with the 50th anniversary of the 1968 International Conference on Human Rights, where family planning was, for the first time, globally affirmed to be a human right. This right-based approach strives to empower every couple to their entitlement to decide on the size of their family, ensuring that every pregnancy is wanted.

Echoing this message, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), jointly organized a national event to commemorate World Population Day and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since family planning was declared a human right. Capt. (Retd.) Zahid Saeed, Federal of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, while welcoming the guests, said that Pakistan's population is growing at an alarming rate of 2.4% per annum. Population is a cross-cutting issue. It has its implications on all spheres of life.



He stressed that all implementing partners and stakeholders would have to make concerted efforts for population stabilization in Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Yusuf Shaikh, Federal Minister of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, expressing serious concern over the rapid population growth in Pakistan, reiterated the Government's commitment to work in unison to increase people's awareness on population issues including the importance of family planning, gender equality, poverty, maternal health, and human rights. While appreciating the efforts of the Provincial Governments, Mr. Shaikh reaffirmed that the Government of Pakistan shall fulfill its international commitments. He stressed that Pakistan cannot reap up the benefits of population dividend and capitalize upon the youth bulge without an extraordinary action. Here, he indicated that the Pakistan Commission on Population is being reactivated with revised composition and Terms of Reference as contained in the National Population Policy 2017. He also mentioned that the Federal Government was in the process of setting up a Special Fund for Population Initiatives with an allocation of 5 billion rupees. He recommended that a dialogue be initiated on developing national consensus on freezing the population factor on the basis of Census 2017, in the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award and in determining political constituencies, in the Provincial and Federal Governments.

The Provincial Ministers of the Governments of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Secretary Balochistan reflected the resolve of their respective Governments to implement family planning programmes in their Provinces through a right-based approach.

UNFPA Representative in Pakistan, Dr. Hassan Mohtasami, delivered the message of the UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem: *"UNFPA is fully committed to continuing to support countries' efforts to uphold the right of individuals, especially women, to plan a family. We are striving to end all unmet need for voluntary family planning in developing countries by 2030. But we cannot do this alone."*

Other dignitaries that spoke at the event included, Dr. Saniya Nisthar, Former Federal Minister of Health; H. E. Margaret Adamson, High Commissioner of Australia, and Ms. Kemi Williams, Deputy Director of DFID-Pakistan.

A pledge was signed by the invitees that reaffirmed the collective efforts of the Government of Pakistan, and its stakeholders, towards the FP2020 commitment of ensuring all citizens the entitled high quality family planning

information and services.

**Photos of the event are available here:**

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1pqPAZXVW0y7zMZuTDaE0kaoJ8nk2ydKz?ogsrc=32>

**For further information:**

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