

Media Update

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UNOPS

PRESS RELEASE

Installation of 1250 solar photovoltaic (PV) systems underway in southern districts of KP

The first solar PV system has been installed in government primary school Kahi Bazid Khel with the support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD). This is the first time the school will benefit from electricity since its construction in 1984. The project is being implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), in partnership with the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Solar Schools Project will provide free, renewable electricity to more than 1250 primary and middle schools across the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Kohat, Hangu, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Dera Ismail Khan.

Speaking about the initiative, Deputy Head of DFID Pakistan, Kemi Williams said, *“The UK is committed to providing quality education in Pakistan. The installation of solar systems will provide uninterrupted electricity to schools and will improve the learning environment for students. I am positive that the provision of sustainable energy and a conducive environment will motivate parents to enroll their children in these schools for a better future.”*

The project was inaugurated at Kahi Bazid Khel school in Kohat, on 29th April, 2019 by chief guests Mr. Zia Ullah Khan Bangash, Advisor for Education to the Chief Minister, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Eng. Abdullah Al Shoaibi, Regional Manager for the Saudi Fund for Development. Mr. Farid Khattak, Additional Director (P&D), Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Musharaf Khan, Chief Planning Officer, Elementary and Secondary



Education Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Mr. Fahad Al-Shehri, Head of Economic Affairs, Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan showed their support of the project at the ceremony. Speaking at the event, Mr. Charles Callanan, UNOPS Hub Director, highlighted the necessity of the project. He said, *“My father was a teacher and he would feel very strongly that the teachers here need all the support they can get. We completely agree with the Advisor and Engr. Al-Shoaibi about the importance of education and how the light that we bring to the children’s books should match the light they bring to our hearts. They are the future, our new generations, and they are the ones that we want to look after, and improve their education and their chances of a better future.”*

Mr. Al-Shoaibi emphasized the importance of education. He said, *“The Saudi Fund for Development has financed more than 70 education projects in 15 countries for a total of more than 2 Billion USD. Education comes at the center of SFD’s focus since it is the driver of development. Education reduces poverty, boosts economic growth and increases income. It increases a person’s chances of having a healthy life, reduces maternal deaths, and combats diseases.”*

Ms. Samita Khawar, Country Manager, UNOPS Pakistan, reaffirmed UNOPS’ commitment to the project, saying, *“This pilot installation is the first step by UNOPS, and our partners, to provide a free and reliable source of electricity to schools in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We are committed to working with the community to safeguard the health and well-being of schoolchildren, and enhance their academic performance, enrolment and attendance through the supply of sustainable and clean electricity.”*

Mr. Benoit Rosenoer, Project Manager for the Solar Schools Project, provided insight into the project and reaffirmed his confidence in its successful implementation. He explained, *“Realizing a qualitative solar PV installation and training the users in a remote rural school, in an environment difficult to access and characterized by a high level of insecurity, is not an easy task. Multiply the schools by 1250 and commit to complete the whole implementation in one year, and it seems almost impossible. Yet I am fully confident that our highly competent and motivated project team will take up the challenge.”*

The maintenance and upkeep of the system will be done by the trained local Parents Teachers Council in all the schools to promote community ownership.

The ceremony was also attended by representatives from UN agencies, Members of KP Assembly, officials from district and provincial Education Department, local elders, as well as the staff and students of the school.
