Women from North Waziristan attend Panel discussion marking Rural Women Day 2019

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nation celebrated the World Food Day on October 16. As part of the celebrations, FAO, in collaboration with ILO and other stakeholders, celebrated the International Rural Women’s Day on 18th October at the NARC premises in Islamabad. The theme for International Rural Women Day 2019 is Rural Women and Girls Building Climate Resilience. The unique gathering was the first time female beneficiaries of FAO projects travelled from North Waziristan to Islamabad, to attend a panel discussion on the role of rural women in agriculture. Members of National and Provincial Assembly, development sector, private non-profits, and the government sector attended the event.

Two panel discussions were held, the first one talking about the role of rural women in agricultural production and how climate adoption in agriculture can improve their access to production, land and financial resources, and the second on challenges of climate change and role of rural women and girls in mitigating measures for rural development. The panelists included FAO Representative in Pakistan Ms. Mina Dowlatchahi, human rights activist Veeru Kohli, Ms. Sameena Nazir president PODA, Mr. Massod ul Mulk CEO Sarhad Rural Support Programme, Ms. Sajida Hanif and Ms. Ayesha Bano both Members of the Provincial Assembly – KP, Ms. Mehnaz Akbar Aziz Member National Assembly, and Ms. Rabia Razzaq senior program officer ILO. The sessions ended with Q&A between the females from the newly merged Tribal Districts and the panel members, where they voiced their opinions on policies and programs related to them.

The Panel discussion brought to light the fact that climate change poses a great threat to poverty reduction and to achieving the SDGs in Pakistan; it impacts health, food security, nutrition, production, and people’s earnings. Yet given
their traditional roles in agricultural production, and as the procurers of water, cooking fuel, and other household resources, women are not only well suited to find solutions to prevent further degradation and adapt to the changing climate, they have a vested interest in doing so. Given the fact that modelling of climate change scenarios for Pakistan show that if agriculture and water management continue along a ‘business as usual’ pathway, increasing temperatures and changes in precipitation will pose serious threats to the future livelihoods of farmers and to the Pakistani agricultural sector. This makes the role of Rural Women and Girls in building climate resilience more central and imperative. It was discusses during that women and men both need to be educated in the role of women when it comes to building resilience to climate change, as well as sustainable market linkages in order to improve agricultural productivity.

Key note address was given by Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman Board of Director Rural Support Network Program. Giving her closing remarks, FAO Representative Ms. Mina Dowlatchahi said: “Access to land, finance, and technology and its knowledge can help rural women become more resilient and contribute to the development of the agriculture sector in Pakistan.”