Media Update
10 March 2020

FAO - UN Women - ILO
PRESS RELEASE

‘Right to own land crucial for empowering rural women’

ISLAMABAD: Women’s increased access to land through inheritance and purchase and elimination of discriminatory practices and customs that prevent rural women from acquiring land are crucial to empower rural women of Pakistan and bridge the gender gap. Experts suggested implementation of Women’s Property Act 2019 to make sure rural women are not left behind.

They were speaking at an event jointly hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations, UN Women Pakistan and International Labour Organization (ILO) in connection with the International Women’s Day here on Tuesday.

Out of Pakistan’s 132 million rural population, 65 million are women. 62 percent women work in the fields while only 19 percent women are in paid employment and 60 percent work as unpaid workers on family farms and enterprises. The unpaid work is valued at 2.6 percent of the national GDP. Only one percent women are entrepreneurs in Pakistan; 20 percent of rural women are classified as own account workers – 14 percent in agriculture and 6 percent in non-agri work.

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. This year's theme for International Women’s Day is “I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights’, which is aligned with UN Women’s new multigenerational campaign, Generation Equality, which marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most progressive roadmap for the empowerment of women and girls, everywhere.
Two panel discussions were organized where development sector actors, NGO representatives, and rural women discussed about the existing policies and frameworks to safeguard the rights of rural working women.

Country Representative FAO Mina Dowlatchahi while moderating the panel said, “Women are not paid equally to that of their male counterparts. Despite steady progress in representation, women are still not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women’s education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men. Pakistan ranks 152nd in Human Development Index.”

Younas Khalid, Senior Gender Advisor UN Women Pakistan, in his presentation said, “We cannot claim to be on the road to advancing gender equality if we do not promote rural women’s participation in decision-making and involve them in the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all relevant policies and strategies with focus on climate change.”

“Fewer rural women make decisions about paid work, marriage or family planning. Rural women face limited access to financial services, health and basic services. We must strengthen rural women’s access to health and other basic services, including education,” he added. He further suggested to introduce technology for easing domestic burden through labour saving devices and improving agricultural work through tools and equipment in order to support rural women.

FAO together with partners is marking the International Women's Day by highlighting the role of rural women in agriculture Sector in Pakistan, the systems set in place that support them, and the policy work that needs to be done to ensure implementation of policies and reforms.

****

For media queries:

mehr.hassan@fao.org | aliyya.noor@fao.org | habib.asgher@unwomen.org
8 March 2020 (Lahore, Pakistan): International Women’s Day (IWD) celebrated on the 8th of March every year, the day is dedicated to honoring the achievements and contribution of women in the various fields all over the world, and also reflect upon what more needs to be done to accelerate efforts for the gender equality and women’s rights.

This year, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Pakistan joined hands with the Women Development Department (WDD), the Government of the Punjab and brought together a diverse group of Pakistani women to celebrate their remarkable achievements in social, economic, cultural and various fields of life.

The inspiring event was held on 8 March in Lahore which attended by parliamentarians, heads of diplomatic missions, government officials, representatives from development organizations, private sector, UN agencies and media. Dr. Firdous Asiq Awan, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, attended the event as the Key Note speaker.

Speaking to the occasion, Ms Ambreen Raza, Secretary, Women Development Department shared the progress of WDD since its inception in 2012. She said, WDD is working closely with UNFPA to address gender-based violence by working towards multi-sectoral mechanism, the coordination mechanism would identify and evaluate the essential services to be delivered by key sectors i.e. health, social services, police, justice and governance. Ms Raza said, the platform will have representatives from each sector to promote coordination and reflection based on the experiences from the field and guide policy and advocacy actions to be promoted within and across the sectors.

Ms Raza further added, the Women Development Department is committed to support the implementation of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 within government departments while working with Ombudsperson offices and other relevant departments. Ms Raza highlighted, the Women Development Department is working with UNFPA on evidence-based policy advocacy, legislative reforms, collection and use of robust and reliable data, and establishing systems for monitoring as well as addressing women’s rights violations. UNFPA commended work done by WDD and efforts of the Government of Pakistan for the implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 including establishing mechanisms to address sexual harassment at workplace both at federal and provincial level. UNFPA look forward to working closely with honorable Minister,
Ms. Ashifa Riaz Fatyana and Women Development Department Punjab for a meaningful, effective and close partnership.

Ms Ashifa Riaz Fatyana, Minister of Punjab for Women Development thanked UNFPA for their continued commitment and support to the ministry to putting in place the mechanism and procedures to address gender based violence.

Dr. Firdous Asiq Awan, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, addressed the event as the Key Note speaker. She reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to women and girls in Pakistan.

"PM Imran Khans policies and democracy reflects his commitment to women's participation, empowerment, education, protection and respect."

"Girls will be empowered if they study, build their capacity, get orientation, and are protected by the State." She concluded.

The event also featured a panel discussion moderated by Ms Irum Bukhari, Additional Chief Secretary Energy Department, the discussion focused on Women Breaking Barriers: Safe and Dignified Workplace. The panel comprised of prominent personalities from civil society, lawyers, technical experts and women rights activists and shared reflections on their work for advocating women’s rights, changing environment with respect to dignified workplaces, and the existing challenges.

The event also marked ‘10 Years of Protection of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010’ by highlighting its impact on the lives of women participating in the workforce: lessons learned over the years, the challenges that still hamper its implementation in every walk of life, and the way forward.