

Media Update

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FAO

PRESS RELEASE

FAO Continues to Support Farmers in Balochistan to Rebuild their Agriculture Livelihoods during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Quetta – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is upscaling its efforts to contain the impact of lockdown due to COVID19 on food security and nutrition - in Balochistan province by ensuring that the local communities have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives during the COVID-19 emergency.

FAO in close collaboration with relevant Government of Balochistan line departments and with the support of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority, Plant Protection Department and various other stakeholders has been supporting the local authorities in responding to complex emergencies, including the locust outbreak, floods, drought and most recently the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown.

As part of its COVID-19 response, FAO is playing an active role in assessing and responding to its potential impacts on lives and livelihoods of local communities. FAO is conducting field awareness sessions and is carrying out electronic and print media campaigns for the farmers to help slow the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring that agriculture production can continue under safety standard operating procedures. Awareness campaigns are underway in various districts of Balochistan in an effort to safeguard livelihoods, markets, food supply chains and livestock of the local communities. Field assessments and coordinating surveys are also a part of FAO's communications strategy to strengthen provincial and national capacities to combat COVID-19.

“COVID-19 is disrupting livelihoods, food supply chain and people’s access to food and basic services. Rural livelihoods need a concerted effort from all

actors to ensure emergency employment or social protection as well as keeping the food system and rural economy moving, particularly those segments driven by small, informal producers, service providers, rural institutions, and value chain participants," said Minà Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan.

FAO urges civil society, relevant departments of government, academia and other stakeholders and partners to work together to ensure that the value chains that deliver our food are coordinated and functioning properly while minimizing the risks of contagion of those who work for it. FAO is responding to the challenges faced by the farmers, men and women, by raising awareness about food safety and health best practices and is also combining efforts with the government and local stakeholders identify and implement the good practice measures to ensure continuity of the food supply chain and food availability and access – including between rural, peri-urban and urban areas.

For media inquiries please contact Mehr Hassan, FAO Pakistan at mehr.hassan@fao.org or Seema Ghazi, FAO Pakistan at seema.ghazi@fao.org

ILO PRESS RELEASE

ILO: As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods

The latest ILO data on the labour market impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reveals the devastating effect on workers in the informal economy and on hundreds of millions of enterprises worldwide.

GENEVA (ILO News) – The continued sharp decline in working hours globally due to the COVID-19 outbreak means that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy - that is nearly half of the global workforce - stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, warns the International Labour Organization.

According to the “ILO Monitor third edition: COVID-19 and the world of work”, the drop in working hours in the current (second) quarter of 2020 is expected to be significantly worse than previously estimated.

Compared to pre-crisis levels (Q4 2019), a 10.5 per cent deterioration is now expected, equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week). The previous estimate was for a 6.7 per cent drop, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. This is due to the prolongation and extension of lockdown measures.

Regionally, the situation has worsened for all major regional groups. Estimates suggest a 12.4 per cent loss of working hours in Q2 for the Americas (compared to pre-crisis levels) and 11.8 per cent for Europe and Central Asia. The estimates for the rest of the regional groups follow closely and are all above 9.5 per cent.

Informal economy impact

As a result of the economic crisis created by the pandemic, almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers (representing the most vulnerable in the labour market), out of a worldwide total of two billion and a global workforce of 3.3 billion, have suffered massive damage to their capacity to earn a living. This is due to lockdown measures and/or because they work in the hardest-hit sectors.

The first month of the crisis is estimated to have resulted in a drop of 60 per cent in the income of informal workers globally. This translates into a drop of 81 per cent in Africa and the Americas, 21.6 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 70 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

Without alternative income sources, these workers and their families will have no means to survive.

Enterprises at risk

The proportion of workers living in countries under recommended or required workplace closures has decreased from 81 to 68 per cent over the last two weeks. The decline from the Embargoed information from the ILO previous estimate of 81 per cent in the second edition of the monitor (published April 7) is primarily a result of changes in China; elsewhere workplace closure measures have increased.

Worldwide, more than 436 million enterprises face high risks of serious disruption. These enterprises are operating in the hardest-hit economic

sectors, including some 232 million in wholesale and retail, 111 million in manufacturing, 51 million in accommodation and food services, and 42 million in real estate and other business activities.

Urgent policy measures needed

The ILO calls for urgent, targeted and flexible measures to support workers and businesses, particularly smaller enterprises, those in the informal economy and others who are vulnerable.

Measures for economic reactivation should follow a job-rich approach, backed by stronger employment policies and institutions, better-resourced and comprehensive social protection systems. International co-ordination on stimulus packages and debt relief measures will also be critical to making recovery effective and sustainable. International labour standards, which already enjoy tripartite consensus, can provide a framework.

“As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent,” said ILO-Director General Guy Ryder. “For millions of workers, no income means no food, no security and no future. Millions of businesses around the world are barely breathing. They have no savings or access to credit. These are the real faces of the world of work. If we don’t help them now, they will simply perish”.

For interviews contact: newsroom@ilo.org

UNHCR PRESS RELEASE

UNHCR donates medical equipment to Children Hospital Quetta

QUETTA, 30 April 2020 – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency provided state-of-the-art medical equipment to Children Hospital Quetta as part of its ongoing

work to support the Provincial Government and improve public health care services in hospitals in Balochistan.

The equipment valued at Rs.7 million includes a fully automated chemistry analyzer, an instrument used for the biochemical testing of total bilirubin, urea, creatinine, liver function, cholesterol, uric acid, triglyceride and calcium in patients.

With this new instrument, the hospital will offer free testing to the most needy Pakistanis and Afghans. Biochemical testing in private laboratories would otherwise cost around Rs.2,000.

“This is the fastest testing machine in Balochistan, with the capacity of testing 60 patients per hour. This machine is very productive which eases the ever-increasing pressures on time,” said the Medical Superintendent of the Children Hospital, Dr. Sher Ahmed Satakzai.

The Head of UNHCR’s Sub-Office in Quetta, Mr. Zephania Amuiri, said, “UNHCR not only aims to strengthen the public health care system but also to support the refugee and Pakistani community at this difficult time.”

He added that although the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted some activities, UNHCR in Pakistan is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic while also continuing its core programme in support of the Provincial Government Health Department, and the refugee and host communities.

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Media contact

Qaiser Khan Afridi - +92 300 5018696 - afridiq@unhcr.org
