

Media Update

3 November 2020

UNESCO

PRESS RELEASE

UNESCO Commemorates International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (IDEI) 2020

November 2, Monday, Islamabad: International Day to End Impunity for All Crimes Against Journalists (IDEI) 2020 was commemorated on November 2, 2020 under UNESCO's Multi-Donor Program on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists. The event was held in collaboration with the European Union Delegation in Pakistan, the Embassy of Sweden, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the High Commission of Canada.

At the 68th Session in 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution marking November 2, as the International Day to End Impunity for All Crimes Against Journalists (IDEI). Across the globe more than 1,000 journalists have been killed from 2006 – 2017 while reporting the news and bringing information to the public. This day recognizes the far reaching consequences of impunity, especially of crimes against journalists.

In the context of increasing gender based violence online, this year's IDEI in Pakistan focused on the challenges faced by the women journalists and media workers. Earlier this year, women journalists, bloggers, media workers and human rights activists issued a statement highlighting the abuse/harassment faced by them on different online platforms. This statement has brought attention to the growing concerns of women journalists and media workers while performing their duties. According to reports the number of women journalists is already less than five percent, and those in the profession face substantial risks and hurdles. The nature of risks are exacerbated by a rapidly evolving spree of hateful speech, incitement, cyber harassment and violence now occurring online.

Ms. Patricia McPhillips, Country Representative and Director, UNESCO welcomed the participants and stressed that, “It is necessary to recognize that if women’s voices are silenced, half of Pakistan is silenced.

Therefore, increasing gender-based violence on online platforms is not a women’s issue alone, or an issue for transgender persons or digital activists, journalists and bloggers alone, but an issue central to protecting democratic values”.

During the event, Ms. Tanzeela Mazhar, a journalist argued that in order to ensure media freedom, women media workers should be protected from coordinated campaigns of abuse and harassment. Digital rights expert, Ms. Nighat Dad, who runs the only cyber harassment helpline in Pakistan, shared her experiences of supporting individuals that reach out via the helpline. She further highlighted the gaps in available avenues for legal aid, psychosocial support and capacity building of ordinary citizens in safely experiencing the internet. Mr. Ali Arsalan explained that harassment and abuse occurring in online and offline spaces are resulting in creating huge implications for youth.

H.E. Ms. Wendy Gilmour, High Commissioner of Canada in her concluding remarks emphasized that the role of independent media in a democracy is crucial and it must be protected at all costs. She noted there is growing recognition by the international community of the need to take into account the specific risks women journalists face both offline and online.

Digital Rights Foundation (<https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/cyber-harassment-helpline/>), cyber harassment helpline can be reach at: 0800-39393. For more details contact Mr. Hamza Khan (UNESCO) at h.swati@unesco.org

UNICEF

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

ADB, Pakistan Sign \$2 Million Grant Agreement to Combat COVID-19 through UNICEF

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN (3 November 2020) — The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Pakistan today signed a \$2 million grant agreement to strengthen Pakistan’s efforts to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Secretary of the Economic Affairs Division, Noor Ahmed and ADB Country Director for Pakistan, Xiaohong Yang signed the agreement. The grant financed from the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund, will help provide life-saving medical supplies, diagnostic and laboratory facilities, and other critical equipment for communities affected by the pandemic.

Ms. Yang and Representative of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Pakistan Aida Girma signed the administrative agreement, which will enable UNICEF to procure the supplies and equipment using the grant.

“ADB continues to work closely with the Government of Pakistan and development partners to assist Pakistan in sustaining the gains made in combating the pandemic” said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Xiaohong Yang. “The grant to be administered through UNICEF will help strengthen Pakistan’s response to the COVID-19 challenge. Pakistan needs to maintain its strong efforts to contain the pandemic through robust prevention and control measures as well as by ensuring the provision of essential medical and emergency healthcare facilities, considering the recent increase in the infection rates.”

The grant supplements an initial \$500,000 provided by ADB through UNICEF to support Pakistan’s procurement of emergency supplies and personal protective equipment. These have been delivered to doctors, nurses, and other medical staff in major health facilities prioritized by the government.

“Since the outbreak of the pandemic, UNICEF has been at the forefront supporting the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to mitigate the spread of coronavirus in the country, said UNICEF Representative in Pakistan,” Aida Girma. “More specifically, UNICEF has supported the national response in risk

communication and community engagement by ensuring timely and accurate information to families and communities and promoting positive behavior to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and procured life-saving medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). We have also endeavored to ensure continuation of essential services including immunization and health, nutrition, education, child protection and water, sanitation and hygiene. We appreciate the Asian Development Bank's continued and generous financial support to UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic".

In April, ADB reallocated \$30 million from the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) to support Pakistan's pandemic response. The NDRMF Board of Directors allocated an additional \$20 million from earned interest from the Endowment Fund capitalized under the project.

In May, ADB approved a \$300 million emergency assistance loan to solidify Pakistan's public health response to the pandemic and help reboot economic activities. The Government of Norway has also contributed a \$5.28 million grant to be administered through ADB to strengthen the emergency response system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province amid the COVID-19 crisis. In June, the bank approved a \$500 million budget support loan to help deliver social protection programs to the poor and vulnerable, expand health sector capabilities, and deliver a pro-poor fiscal stimulus to boost growth and create jobs.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

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UNICEF

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