

Media Update

17 March 2021

UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP Pakistan builds Gilgit Baltistan Judiciary's capacity with Human Rights and Rule of Law trainings

Gilgit, 17 March 2021— Amid many other responsibilities, justice sector professionals are responsible for ensuring citizen's their basic human rights. It is for this reason that UNDP Pakistan's Amn-o-Insaf Programme organized two five-day trainings on Human Rights and Rule of Law for the District Judiciary of Gilgit Baltistan at the Judicial Academy, Gilgit. Held between 8 March to 17 March 2021 while observing strict Covid SOPs, the first round of the training was for judges from Gilgit Division while the second round will be held for judges from Skardu Division. Led by Professor Niaz. A. Shah from University of Hull and trained as a barrister at the Lincoln's Inn, London, the target of these trainings was to strengthen the capacity of Gilgit Baltistan's entire district judiciary.

Honourable Chief Justice GB Chief Court inaugurated the training and also the GB Judicial Academy. This will be the first training in the newly established Judicial Academy of Gilgit Baltistan. Judges from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judiciary also delivered guest lectures via zoom/team.

The training focused on sensitising the District Judiciary on human rights and the rule of law and to enable judges to deliver human rights-based judgements protecting fundamental rights of people. The purpose was to sensitize judges on implementation of international human rights laws, independence of judiciary, the right to fair trial, children and women human rights and equality and non-discrimination in the justice system.

While highlighting the importance of Human Rights and a strong Rule of Law, Professor Niaz said countries and communities with strengthened rule of law give their citizens the stability of knowing that all rights are respected and

protected. “Human Rights and Rule of Law are intertwined. There is no rule of law within societies if human rights are not protected and vice versa; human rights cannot be protected in societies without a strong rule of law. The rule of law is the implementation mechanism for human rights, turning them from a principle into a reality”.

This training on Human Rights and Rule of Law for Gilgit’s senior judiciary is a key component of UNDP Pakistan’s Amn-o-Insaf Programme that works with the government, rule of law & justice institutions and communities in promoting rule of law through provision of support to the justice and security sectors in four provinces of Pakistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and AJ&K.

The programme aims to promote an enabling environment, which will deepen the on-going efforts to secure peace and stabilization. Amn-o-Insaf is also assisting institutional and capacity development of rule of law institutions to ensure effective and speedy provision of justice and security services.

For additional information, please contact Ayesha Babar at ayesha.babar@undp.org or +92 (51) 835 5650

UNICEF - WHO - UNFPA

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Disruptions in health services due to COVID-19 “may have contributed to an additional 239,000 child and maternal deaths in South Asia” - UN report

Health services must urgently be restored and strengthened to contain the pandemic’s impact on the most vulnerable families

Kathmandu/Islamabad, 17 March 2021: Drastic cuts in the availability and use of essential public health services across South Asia due to COVID-19

may have contributed to an estimated 228,000 additional child deaths in 2020, according to a new United Nations [report](#). Around 11,000 additional maternal deaths are also expected.

Clinics and other health facilities have been closed and many vital health and nutrition programmes halted as the region battles to contain COVID-19 cases, which numbered 11 million by the end of 2020.

The report, commissioned by UNICEF and supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), cites examples of the more severe service disruptions. They include an 80 per cent drop in the number of young children treated for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in Nepal and Bangladesh, and a sharp drop in childhood immunizations in Pakistan and India.

“The fall-off of these critical services has had a devastating impact on the health and nutrition of the poorest families,” said **UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia George Laryea-Adjei**. “It is absolutely vital that these services are fully restored for children and mothers who are in desperate need of them, and that everything possible is done to ensure that people feel safe to use them.”

The report calls for making essential health services for pregnant women, adolescents and young infants a topmost priority. Strengthening supply chains for the delivery of vaccines and other essential childhood medicines is also vital.

“Maintaining essential health services is an important pillar of WHO’s COVID-19 response strategy,” said **Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director of the WHO South-East Asia Region**. “Countries in the region have been focusing efforts on continuation and restoration of essential services, as disruption would only increase the risk of deaths from preventable causes.” Some 420 million children in South Asia remain out of school due to pandemic control measures. The report warns that 4.5 million girls are likely to never return to school and are at particular risk due to deteriorating access to sexual and reproductive health and information services.

“Given the cultural and social context of South Asia, the suspension of these services is deepening inequalities and is likely to lead to an increase in the number of maternal and neonatal deaths,” said **Bjorn Andersson, Asia-Pacific Regional Director of UNFPA**. “There are also likely to be an additional 3.5 million unintended pregnancies in this region.”

Focusing on South Asia's six most populous countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), the report notes that the increased levels of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity caused by the pandemic have further undermined public health.

“It is crucial that we ensure the continuity of essential services for women and children in Pakistan -- especially the most vulnerable and the hardest-to-reach,” said **Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan**. “COVID-19-related disruptions have had a heavy impact on children's access to essential services. UNICEF will continue to support the Government to respond to the pandemic and to build more resilient health and education systems that can reach all children.”

The report calls for cash transfer programmes for the poorest families. It welcomes the various national social safety net programmes put in place since the start of the pandemic, but notes that their full impact still needs to be evaluated.

####

[Access Full Report and the 4-page summary from here. Download multimedia here.](#)

About WHO

WHO South-East Asia is home to over a quarter of the world's population. Committed to building a better, healthier future for the nearly two billion people in the Region, WHO is working with the 11 Member States to address persisting and emerging epidemiological and demographic challenges. The Region has eight flagship priority programmes: Reducing maternal, under-five and neonatal mortality; measles and rubella elimination; preventing non-communicable diseases; universal health coverage with a focus on human resources for health and essential medicines; combating antimicrobial resistance; scaling up capacities for emergency risk management; eliminating neglected tropical diseases and accelerating efforts to end TB.

About UNFPA

The United Nations Population Fund is the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency, working in over 150 countries to end maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning, and gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls. UNFPA's mandate is grounded in gender equality

and human rights, guided by the Programme of Action forged at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). UNFPA's Asia-Pacific Regional Office covers 22 countries in Asia and 14 countries in the Pacific. For more on our COVID-19 response, visit www.unfpa.org/COVID19. Follow our Asia-Pacific Regional Office on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Join our multimedia initiative Humans of ICPD on Facebook and Instagram.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

UNICEF's [Regional Office for South Asia](#) (ROSA) works with UNICEF Country Offices in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to help to save children's lives, defend their rights, and help them fulfil their potential. Please follow UNICEF Pakistan on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). For more information about COVID-19, click [here](#).

For media inquiries, please contact:

- Catherine Weibel, Chief of Advocacy & Communication, UNICEF Pakistan, cweibel@unicef.org, +92 300 500 2595
- Eliane Luthi, Regional Chief of Communication, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia eluthi@unicef.org, +977 98010 30076
- Roy Wadia, Regional Communications Advisor, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, wadia@unfpa.org, +66 (0) 84 875 2634
- Shamila Sharma, Public Information and Advocacy Officer, WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, sharmasha@who.int, +91 98182 87256
