

Media Update-2

20 May 2021

ILO

PRESS RELEASE

Stakeholders dialogue on practical and improved measures for youth employment and empowerment

The ILO on behalf of the UN in Pakistan in collaboration with the Planning Commission co-hosted a National Policy Dialogue on 'Youth Employment, Economic Participation, and Opportunities', to define priorities and interventions for 2021-22.

ISLAMABAD (ILO News): The Government of Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to promote productive employment and decent work for young women and men in Pakistan at multi-stakeholder consultation. A number of areas were identified to promote equitable and gender sensitive employment services for young women and men.

In March 2021, the Government of Pakistan embarked on a countrywide exercise to determine the needs of Pakistani youth, and the barriers to actualizing their potential. Multiple deliberations, consultations and groupthinkings were organized, to understand why Pakistan has been unable to convert its youth bulge into economic dividend. On March 31, 2021, a high-level policy forum brought together experts, young leaders, the UN, development partners, academicians and think tanks, to highlight and identify youth priorities. Chaired by the Honourable Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Mr Asad Umar, the forum featured sixty young leaders, who spoke about their challenges, and shared recommendations for Pakistan.

As a follow up to the March consultations, online a virtual national policy dialogue on 'Youth Employment, Economic Participation, and Opportunity' was organized jointly by the Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan and the United Nations system led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 28 April 2021. The objective of the policy dialogue, which fits into the

Governments long-term vision of addressing the country's youth employment challenges, was to inform youth employment interventions by the Government of Pakistan in 2021-22.

More than 100 stakeholders from Government, Ministries, UN, technical institutions, academics, civil society organizations, employers/private sector, workers' organization, development agencies, and youth leaders called for practical actions to address the challenge of youth employment and empowerment.

In his opening remarks, Mr Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, highlighted the timely efforts to promote youth employment in the context of the COVID-19 impact on Pakistan's economy and workers. He expressed optimism in young Pakistanis' resilience and creativity and encouraged participants to not only share their suggestions but also join Government efforts in promoting decent jobs for young women and men.

Dr Shabnum Sarfraz, Member Social Sector of Planning Commission, welcomed all participants and informed participants of the wider national consultation being undertaken by Government of Pakistan to reach out 40,000 young thought leaders for inputs on the national youth agenda.

Ms Saima Nadeem, MNA & Parliamentary Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination, in her video message, highlighted major steps taken by the Government in promoting gainful employment for young women and men. She highlighted various projects initiated under Kamyab-Jawan and Ehsaas Programme and expressed commitment of Government to work on promoting decent jobs for youth.

Mr Felix Weidenkaff, ILO Employment Specialist and regional youth employment focal point for Asia-Pacific, provided an analysis of the youth employment situation and underlying labour market challenges in Pakistan prior to COVID-19 and the impact of the crisis on youth in the labour market. The analysis highlighted the need for productive employment opportunities for a growing youth population, addressing gender disparities in labour force participation, the large share of youth in informal employment and the high share of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Context-specific and comprehensive youth employment measures in Pakistan needed to take into account pro-employment macro-economic policies with a focus on youth, youth employability by improving education, training, and school to

work transition, youth entrepreneurship, gender equality and rights at work, while also taking into account the challenges and opportunities presented by pre-crisis future of work trends, from technological changes to environmental and climate change.

Mr Ali Qureshi, Social Protection Specialist from World Bank, presented major finding of the 'Pakistan Jobs Diagnostic' study – which identified three main challenges, i.e., high-informality, low female labour-force participation, and low education of Pakistani workforce. The World Bank's recommendations included building human capital, improving job quality, and extending access to social protection to youth. He also shared case studies from Kenya and Tanzania on creating youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities through different intervention models.

Mr Talha Chishti from the British Council highlighted key lessons learnt in promoting entrepreneurship including through the social entrepreneurship.

Youth leaders highlighted various challenges and opportunities for promoting youth employment including entrepreneurship development, business incubation centres, improving working conditions for women, establishing youth employment facilitation centres, providing internship and apprenticeship opportunities, including professional ethics in curriculum, career counselling, and inclusive policies for transgender, persons with disabilities and other excluded segments of society.

The employer representatives highlighted their expectations for young workers to be equipped with market-relevant skills and workplace ethics, and bring innovation and creativity to the world of work. They also asked the Government to support the private sector development by improving the business environment and growth-oriented policies with a focus on job creation.

During the plenary discussion, participants deliberated on measures to create jobs over the next three years, increase female labour force participation and tackle barriers preventing women from equal access to education. In addition, strategies on training and employment, support the transition from informal to formal economy, supporting youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), and support measures for the private sector to create decent jobs for youth were discussed. Participants also deliberated on the Kamyab-Jawan programme and recommended measures to improve the visibility of the programme and to facilitate the access to loans for new entrepreneurs.

The meeting concluded with vote of thanks by Dr Shabnum Sarfaraz who informed participants that all feedback would be considered in the next budget and useful projects will be initiated to promote decent jobs for young women and men.

UNHCR

PRESS RELEASE

UNHCR and EU's support in education sector helps increase enrolment of Pakistani, refugee children

PESHAWAR, 20 May 2021: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency's rehabilitation of five public schools in Swabi district will help increase the enrolment of students by 70 per cent, thanks to the support of the European Union. A number of schools are also being improved in other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Thanks to investments channeled towards the largest refugee-hosting districts, Pakistani and refugee children will benefit from safer learning environments and better facilities, including newly built classrooms, water and sanitation facilities, such as latrines, and furniture sets.

In Swabi district, the Government Higher Secondary School Ismaila, the Government Primary School Ismaila, the Government High Secondary School Yaar Hussain, the Government Primary School Yaar Hussain and the Government Primary School Hemlet were rehabilitated and improved.

A ceremony to mark these efforts was held at the Government Higher Secondary School Ismaila. The Education Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Shahram Khan Tarakai, the Head of UNHCR's Sub-Office in Peshawar, Mr. Bernard Inkoom, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Abbas Khan, and other dignitaries from various government departments participated in the event.

The Education Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Tarakai, appreciated UNHCR and the European Union for strengthening Pakistan's development initiatives, including in the education sector.

“Despite the difficult circumstances, our resolve remains strong; we'll continue to host Afghan refugees. During these past 40 years, we've lived together peacefully with our Afghan brothers and sisters. As the impact of the pandemic is far-reaching, even eroding our hard-earned gains in the education sector, we call on the international community to continue support countries – like ours – which are committed to leaving no one behind,” he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Inkoom expressed his admiration of the hospitality of Pakistani people towards Afghan refugees. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, he emphasized how investments into the education sector were more crucial than ever, adding that the European Union's generous support has been particularly valuable in this regard.

“With improved facilities in public schools, Pakistani and refugee students will have an opportunity to learn side-by-side in a safe environment,” he said. He added that it's important to highlight internationally that Pakistan leads by example and through its good practices – sharing its vital services with Afghan refugees. “Providing such support is one way of showing solidarity with these communities that have hosted refugees for over four decades,” he emphasized.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Khan, thanked the international community, including UNHCR, for continuing to meet challenges and for helping ensure that all children living in Pakistan are able to grow and learn in a safe environment.

Since 2009, through the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas programme, UNHCR supported the implementation of 4,300 projects in the areas of education, health, infrastructure, livelihoods as well as water and sanitation across the country. A total of 12.4 million people – 85 per cent Pakistanis and 15 per cent Afghan refugees – have benefitted.

ENDS

[FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:](#)

Zikrea Saleah

UNHCR, Peshawar
+93 300 0652180

Qaiser Khan Afridi
UNHCR, Islamabad
+92 300 5018696

Photo caption:

The Health Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Shahram Khan Tarakai, Head of UNHCR's Sub-Office in Peshawar, Mr. Bernard Inkoom, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, Mr. Abbas Khan, and other government official participating in a ceremony held in Swabi district to mark joint efforts to improve access to education for Pakistani and refugee students. © UNHCR/Z. Saleah