

# Media Update

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## ILO

PRESS RELEASE

### Empowering Migrant Workers through the National Skills Passport Initiative

***Participants discuss the many challenges faced by Pakistani migrant workers and set out a strategy to recognize and enhance the skills and qualifications of returning workers.***

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (ILO News) – To many Pakistani migrant workers, the National Skills Passport initiative will prove to be a gateway to obtain recognition of their skills and ensure decent employment opportunities for returnee migrant workers, participants at a consultative dialogue concluded today in Islamabad.

The National Skills Passport provides a comprehensive catalogue of an individual's skills, obtained through formal and informal channels, and provides a migrant worker with documentation of gained qualifications, skills, competencies, and experience in a systematic manner. The National Skills Passport is linked with the Recognition of Prior Learning platform, which formally assesses, certifies, and recognizes the competencies, acquired through informal and unregulated processes.

The consultation event was jointly organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP) in Islamabad in collaboration with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development (MOP&HRD) and was attended by representatives

from Government departments, employers' and workers' organizations, and development partners.

The National Skills Passport initiative has been supported by the ILO project Governance of Labour Migration in South and Southeast Asia (GOALS), which is generously supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

“We are pleased to acknowledge that the Government of Pakistan has taken commendable steps to protect the rights of migrant workers through digital registration, licensing of overseas employment promoters, authentication of foreign employment, grievance redressal mechanisms and welfare programmes for migrant workers and their families,” said Geir Tonstol, Country Director of ILO Pakistan.

“Skilled labour is in increasing demand, including in the countries that received the largest share of Pakistan’s migrant workers. It is important to equip aspiring migrant workers with the right skill sets to meet the demands of the international labour market,” he added.

Speaking at the occasion, Majyd Aziz, former President of the Employers’ Federation of Pakistan stated that the National Skills Passport is not just a card, it is the digital portfolio of an individual to find a decent work opportunity locally and internationally. “We are thankful to the ILO’s technical support for piloting innovative approaches in Pakistan including National Skills Passport and South Asia Regional Qualifications Frameworks,” he added.

“The Government of Pakistan recognizes the increasing demand for skilled human resources in the international labour market and has been focusing on the local and international industry demand-driven skills development programs,” said Jawad Sohrab Malik, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Labour and Human Resource Development.

He further emphasized that the government of Pakistan has launched a digital 24/7 complaint cell called 'Call Sarzameen' to promptly address complaints submitted by overseas Pakistanis. He also mentioned 'Naya Pakistan Calling,'

a platform that facilitates the professional Pakistani diaspora in contributing their knowledge and skills towards national development.

## Background:

Pakistan is the second largest country of origin for migrant workers from South Asia. According to estimates prepared by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, more than 10 million Pakistanis have migrated for overseas employment to 54 countries since 1971. Last year, in 2022, around 800,000 Pakistanis migrated for overseas employment through official channels.

Unfortunately, however, the majority of Pakistani migrant workers are employed as unskilled or low-skilled workers, and, consequently, earn less than a third of what a skilled worker earns.

Anticipating and matching skills supply and demand for migrant workers is thus crucial for maintaining Pakistan's attractiveness as a source of migrant labour.

## For further information please contact:

**Muhammad Numan**

**Communication Officer**

Email: [numan@ilo.org](mailto:numan@ilo.org)

Mobile: +92 303 5000041

# UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

## UNDP Urges Swift Action and New Directions to Advance Asia-Pacific's Human Development

**NOVEMBER 6, 2023** - The Asia-Pacific region is lurching towards an era of unmet aspirations, worsening inequalities, and a steady erosion of democratic spaces. Rising global tensions, new technologies, growing polarization, and

existential threats linked to climate change threaten to disrupt improvements in well-being the region has seen in past decades, says a new report from the United Nations Development Programme.

The 2024 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, launched today, paints a qualified picture of long-term progress, but also persistent disparity and widespread disruption, foreseeing a turbulent development landscape and urgently calling for new directions to boost human development.

Titled Making our Future: New Directions for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific, the new report argues that unmet aspirations, heightened human insecurity, and a potentially more turbulent future create an urgent need for change.

It warns that the region faces three converging ‘risk clusters’, ranging from existential threats due to climate change and future pandemics, economic headwinds from shifting globalization patterns and automation, and a flagging pace of reform due to diminishing democratic spaces, rising populism, and polarization.

While the region will account for two-thirds of global economic growth this year, income and wealth disparities are worsening, particularly in South Asia, where the wealthiest 10 percent control over half of the total income. More than 185 million people continue to live in extreme poverty – earning below \$2.15 a day – a number that is expected to climb higher following the economic shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, says the report.

“The report underscores that to overcome existing challenges, we must prioritize investments in human development, with an understanding that each nation will tailor its own pathways to do so,” said Kanni Wignaraja, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP’s Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. “By fostering a people-first policy and smart growth strategies that put a high value on natural assets, we can pave the way for a future that is not only more secure and peaceful but also sustainable and prosperous for many millions more.”

To bring about that change the Report calls for three new directions in human development: to put people at the heart of development, to recalibrate growth strategies to generate more jobs and respect the environment, and to focus relentlessly on the politics of reform and the science of delivery to turn ideas into practice.

It also provides a panoramic view of how in an uncertain future, countries can revitalize development strategies to close existing inequality gaps and reduce human insecurity.

A people-centred strategy must start by expanding choice for everyone by, among other things, tackling structural exclusion, upholding human dignity, and building capability. Tackling structural exclusion is not only the 'right thing to do,' it could also produce large economic benefits. Promoting women's equality alone could boost the region's collective annual Gross Domestic Product by \$4.5 trillion by 2025, the report says.

With external market conditions becoming more competitive, a razor-sharp focus on competitiveness and diversification is essential. The Report highlights new areas of economic opportunity in the low carbon 'green economy' and in technologies, and the region's rich marine resources that can be optimized and sustained through new technology and investment as part of the blue economy, which is especially important for Small Island Developing States.

"The call for economic growth should be louder, not quieter, as growth remains essential for human development," said Philip Schellekens, UNDP's Chief Economist for Asia and the Pacific, and the principal author of the Report. "Facing growing headwinds to growth and job creation and the prospect of further disruption, it is time to recalibrate both export-led and domestically oriented growth strategies," he said.

The region's large informal workforce—about 1.3 billion people—is being left behind, with many workers trapped in low-quality jobs because the formal sector has failed to offer decent employment opportunities. And the region has seen a steady reversal in democratic practices, to a degree last seen in the late 1970s, the report notes, with the pandemic enabling governments to further tighten restrictions on civil liberties.

To chart a new course, governments would need to be future fit to combat the challenges to come. It unpacks how a greater focus on making change happen would be rooted in leadership and governance that is more anticipatory, more adaptable, and more agile.

The full report can be accessed at this link: <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/rhdr2024>

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