

# Media Update

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## WFP

PRESS RELEASE

### WFP Pakistan and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GoKP) partner to boost girls' education through a cash-based stipend programme.

**Islamabad:** Today, the Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mark the launch of a cash-based stipend programme for adolescent girls in the Merged Districts (MDs) of KP. The event, held at Marriot Hotel, was at the invitation of the Secretary, Education Department, Mr. Masood Ahmed and the Representative and Country Director of WFP Pakistan, Ms. Coco Ushiyama.

The Girls' Stipend Programme aims to improve girls' access to and retention in schools, especially at the higher grades where drop-out rates are high, through the provision of income support to the families of adolescent girls. Over three years of the programme some 30,000 girls in grades 6 -12 in more than 500 government girls' middle and higher schools will receive PKR 1000 per month. This 3-year programme covering all seven districts and sub-divisions in the merged districts is costed at USD 4.4 million, averaging USD 1.1 million per year.

The Secretary of Education at the official launch of the programme stated, "This intervention lays the foundation stone for our future, especially for under-privileged adolescent girls in MDs. In today's society, access to quality education is imperative for our successful future". He further added that the Government of KP places a high priority in ensuring the access to education enrolment for all out-of-school children. Currently, there are over 1 million children aged 5 to 16 years who are not enrolled in school in the MDs. A staggering 67 percent of the population in MDs is unable to read or write, highlighting low performing educational indicators across the MD region. "

WFP Pakistan's Representative and Country Director, Coco Ushiyama, highlighted the importance of education, "The profound impact of educating girls is encapsulated in the proverb "Educate a girl and you educate a nation". When women and girls are empowered with better access to education, information, resources, services and economic opportunities, the ripple effects are far-reaching. Evidence confirms that this empowerment also leads to enhanced food security and improved nutrition for women and girls, their families and communities, laying the foundation for a prosperous society."

The Girls' Stipend Programme builds on decades-long partnership between the Department of Education, KP and WFP. Most recently in 2021, WFP in support of the Government's COVID-19 response piloted a cash-based Stipend Programme in the merged districts reaching some 21,000 girls in 280 schools. An impact assessment of that pilot found a significant 14 percent increase in enrollment, and a 96 percent improvement in attendance rates.

The Adolescent Girls Programme will be implemented under the overall supervision of E&SED, with WFP's technical support in cash-based transfer operations, data collection, profiling, and skill enhancement for the Education Department staff involved in the education programme.

Today's event is part of a series of school-based interventions by WFP Pakistan to advance human capital development. School-based programmes are one of the most extensive social safety nets worldwide, which can help maximize the return on investment in education, because it facilitates access to school and improves the nutritional status, health and cognitive development of children.

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