

Media Update

30 April 2024

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF unveils new vision to protect and empower adolescent girls in Pakistan

Urgent action needed as almost 55 per cent of adolescent girls are anaemic; Pakistan also ranks 6th globally in early child marriages.

ISLAMABAD, 30 April 2024 – UNICEF Pakistan launched its National Gender Strategy (2024-2027) today to deliver lasting, transformative change for millions of girls between 10-19 years.

If the strategy is implemented effectively from urban to rural areas, it can drive change, address inequalities and improve the lives of all girls and women, including those living with disability.

"Striving for equal opportunities for all, especially girls, is fundamental to Pakistan's progress. Investing in girls is a win-win for everyone," said Nilofer Bakhtiar, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women. "It can lead to higher incomes and increased productivity, benefiting not only girls, but also the nation. By investing in girls' leadership, we unlock their full potential and pave the way for their brighter future."

Today, adolescent girls in Pakistan face stark challenges in their education, health, nutrition and well-being. For example, Pakistan is home to nearly 19 million child brides.

In addition, more than half of adolescent girls, or 54 per cent, are pregnant before their 18th birthday which can be life-threatening for the mother and the child. A staggering 88 per cent of adolescent girls live in poverty which hampers the country's progress.

“Millions of children, most of whom are girls, face devastating challenges in their daily lives. Often, they cannot use even basic social services like health care. They are forced to drop out of school due to early marriage, poverty, and deep-rooted social norms,” said Inoussa Kabore, UNICEF Deputy Representative in Pakistan. “If all girls and women were to have the opportunities that are their right, such as studying, working, they would contribute to the economy and help Pakistan to prosper. No country will get ahead if half its population is left behind. UNICEF looks forward to working with the Government, civil society organizations, communities, girls and women, men and boys, to change the national dialogue on this critical issue.”

During the launch, UNICEF presented URAAN, which embodies UNICEF’s spirit on gender equality, with wings that symbolize greater equity in programming on gender.

The new strategy reiterates UNICEF’s commitment to the leadership and well-being of adolescent girls with a series of time-bound results.

Through the strategy, UNICEF will:

- **Invest in girls’ leadership, voice and agency:** To make girls powerful changemakers, the strategy will equip them with the skills and confidence necessary to lead in all aspects of their lives.
- **Address harmful attitudes and behaviours:** Social and behaviour change initiatives will challenge deep rooted attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality. To change existing beliefs, UNICEF will work with influencers like leaders, religious figures, boys and men. Mass and social media platforms will amplify positive messages.
- **Strengthen & scale up gender equitable programming** so that adolescent girls can get the quality services they deserve, especially in education, healthcare, nutrition and social protection. Greater accountability and protection for girls will help too.

The strategy will also address barriers at the national and provincial levels, including gaps in gender-disaggregated data, infrastructure and child protection measures.

###

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children in Pakistan, visit <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/>

For more information, please contact:

Abdul Sami Malik, UNICEF Pakistan, +92-300-855-6654, asmalik@unicef.org

WFP

PRESS RELEASE

EU Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka Visits Flood-Hit Dadu, Sindh, Witnesses European Union's Relief and Climate Resilience Initiatives

30 April 2024, Dadu, Sindh – A delegation led by the Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, embarked on a one-day field mission to Dadu, Sindh, to witness the impact and scale of support provided by the European Union (EU) to flood-affected communities in a district that was among the hardest hit by the devastating floods in 2022. In the wake of unprecedented rainfall and floods that swept across Pakistan in 2022, the EU launched a comprehensive relief and recovery initiative aimed at immediate relief, building the resilience of communities through climate-resilient housing, sanitation, livelihood opportunities, as well as child protection services.

The delegation visited EU-funded project sites in four villages across Dadu where on behalf of the European Union the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Save the Children International (SCI) Pakistan are implementing development projects focusing on rehabilitating community assets, providing child protection, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) as well as shelters for the community.

During the visit, the delegation observed the distribution of cash assistance to participants under WFP's project. The Ambassador and her team inspected rainwater harvesting ponds for irrigation, communal washing pads, and protective pathways. The delegation also met women entrepreneurs who revived their livelihoods since the 2022 floods, e.g. by opening tuck shops and tailoring businesses. Women-led village development committees shared their challenges and aspirations with the delegation.

The delegation also visited sites where UNICEF is providing child protection and education services with EU funds. At the Children's drop-in centre and a safe space for girls and women, the Ambassador witnessed children engaging in recreational activities and adolescent girls and women learning vocational skills such as embroidery and stitching. At these facilities, trained professionals also provide psycho-social support to help them recover from trauma and raise awareness on protection from violence and abuse. Later, the delegation visited a flood-damaged public school which UNICEF has since rehabilitated. Besides teaching and learning materials, UNICEF has also provided safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, especially for girls, in all rehabilitated schools.

The delegation further toured the locations where SCI Pakistan created a Child-friendly Space, Climate-Resilient Housing and Sanitation facilities, engaging in discussions with the beneficiaries of the project. Towards the conclusion of their visit, they also observed the livelihoods initiative focusing on kitchen gardening, sustainable agriculture, and livestock management support.

On-site, Ambassador Riina Kionka expressed that the field visit underscores the EU's commitment to supporting development work in Pakistan; "Although almost two years have passed, the flood-affected communities still require our attention and support. While I'm glad that the EU support has made a significant difference in the lives of the hardest-hit, the looming threat of climate change means extreme weather will become more frequent. The EU is working with Pakistan to build long-term resilience to climate change" she said.

WFP's Head of provincial office in Sindh, Ms. Judith Lumu, Prem Bahadur Chand, UNICEF's Chief of Field Office - Sindh, and Deputy Country Director from SCI Pakistan Bilal Taj joined the delegation and showed the Ambassador and First Secretary Dr Christian Raitz von Frenzt the many activities ongoing.

WFP, UNICEF, and SCI Pakistan are currently implementing these three projects with a financial volume of EUR 12 million for the European Union in 13 districts across three provinces in Pakistan: Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa. EURO 12 million has been allocated to benefit 22,365 households. Countrywide, the EU has spent EUR 227 million of grant aid on humanitarian and recovery projects in support of flood-affected communities. EU Member States contributed another EUR 689 million in subsidised loans (EUR 438 million) and grant (251 million), not counting their additional aid in kind.

#

Video content & shotlist: <https://we.tl/t-VmWawfg65r>

Photos with captions: <https://rb.gy/p36nyz>

For more information, please contact:

Samar Saeed Akhtar/ EU Delegation to Pakistan:

Samar-Saeed.AKHTAR@eeas.europa.eu

Anam Abbas/ WFP, anam.abbas@wfp.org

Abdul Sami Malik/ UNICEF, asmalik@unicef.org

Humera Iqbal/ SCI Pakistan, humera.iqbal@savethechildren.org